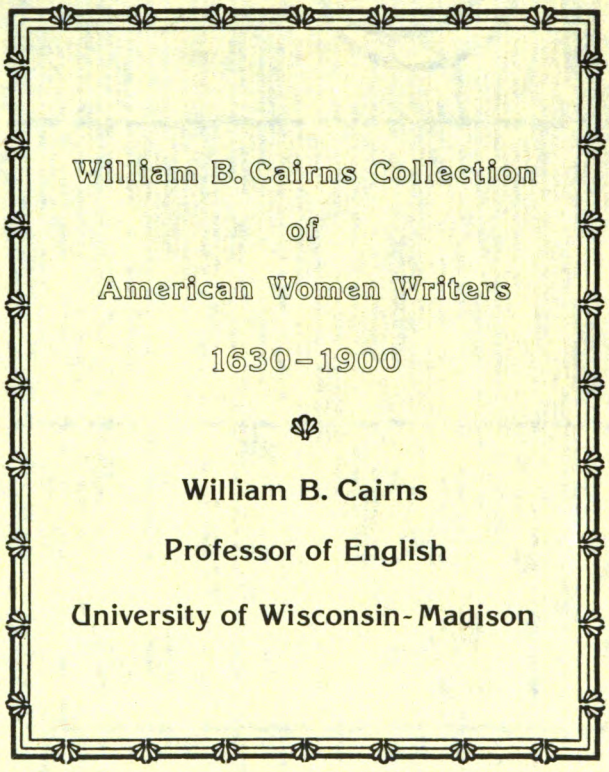
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google books

https://books.google.com

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

1st Ed
2nd book
$70

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

DESERTED WIFE.

BY

EMMA D. E. NEVITT SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF

"RETRIBUTION, OR THE VALE OF SHADOWS."

"Various the ways in which our souls are tried;
Love often fails where most our faith relied;
Some wayward heart may win without a thought,
That which thine own by sacrifice hath bought;
Whilst thou, forsaken, grieving, left to pine,
Vainly mayst claim his plighted faith as thine;
Vainly with forced indulgence strive to smile
In the cold world, heart-broken all the while,
Or from its glittering and unquiet crowd,
Thy brain on fire, thy spirit crushed and bowed,
Creep home unnoticed, there to weep alone,
Mocked by a claim that gives thee not thine own,
Which leaves thee bound through all thy blighted youth
To him whose perjured soul hath broke its truth;
While the just world beholding thee bereft—
Scorns—not his sin—but *thee*, for being left."

MRS. NORTON'S DREAM.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & COMPANY, 200 BROADWAY.
PHILADELPHIA:
GEO. S. APPLETON, 164 CHESNUT-STREET.
M DCCC L.

Digitized by Google

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1850,
By D. APPLETON & COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

Digitized by Google

Rare Books
Cairns
PS
2892.
D4
1850

TO

DOCTOR WILLIAM ELDER,

OF PHILADELPHIA,

WHOSE CONSTANT ASSISTANCE AND KIND ENCOURAGEMENT

CHEERED, INSPIRED, AND SUSTAINED HER

THROUGH THE TOILS AND TRIALS OF HER VOCATION,

This Book is Inscribed,

AS AN ASSURANCE OF GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE, BY

THE AUTHOR.

WASHINGTON, JUNE 3, 1850.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION.

MARRIAGE.

"Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship."
Shakspeare.

"The bloom or blight of all men's happiness."
Byron.

In no other civilized country in the world is marriage contracted, or dissolved, with such culpable levity as in our own. In no other civilized country (except, perhaps, in France, just at present), can divorce be obtained with such facility, and upon such slight grounds. And it may be the very ease with which the sacred bond may be broken that leads many people into forming it so lightly. An obligation so easily annulled may be carelessly contracted. I remember an anecdote in point:—"Take care—this contemplated marriage of yours is a hasty affair—and when consummated, it is for *life*, you know—'Till death do you part,'" said a young man to his friend, who was about to enter into the "holy state." "Oh, no! not necessarily—there are such things as *divorces*, recollect," laughingly replied the perspective bridegroom—a handsome hero, of black eyes and white teeth—and his black eyes flashed, and his white teeth gleamed, as though he had been saying the wittiest thing in the world. The youth was in love—therefore his speech could not be taken seriously. He was jesting. *Still* his words betrayed—that even then, in the heyday of his passion, a future contingency was present to his mind. That future contingency *arrived*—would *never* have arrived—had he not known beforehand of its remedy. He married—lived with his young bride eighteen months. She became the mother of a little girl—fell into ill health—lost her beauty and attractions. He left her—to travel in Europe—he said—but years passed, and he never returned or wrote. He left her broken in heart; broken in health, injured in reputation; exposed to the misconstructions of the world; to the miseries of poverty; to the temptations of youth, of isolation, and of warm affections; to the pursuit of the licentious; to the calumny of the wicked or the thoughtless; and worse than all to bear up against—the doubts and suspicions of the good. She was destitute of mental resources—in delicate health—morbidly sensitive, and she sank—sank—under the accumulating miseries of her position—and died—in the twenty-second year of her age, and in the fourth of her wretched marriage.

I was about to cite another case—a *second* case—when the memory of a third; a fourth; a fifth; a *dozen* aggravated instances of desertion, presented themselves to my mind, and pressed upon me, and, reader, I cannot trouble you with the whole of them. The evils of *misalliance* are irremediable, at least by foreign interference; and the miseries of desertion are well nigh incurable, or, "the cure is worse than the disease." Let us look at the *causes* and the means of *prevention*, of unhappy marriages. Yet, if you read only for the story, just skip the whole of this chapter, and commence at the *next*, which opens the drama.

To go back to the beginning—a primary cause of unhappy marriage is a *defective moral and physical education*. In our country intellectual education is on a par with that of other enlightened nations of the earth—not so moral and physical education. Prudence, fortitude, truth, reverence, and fidelity, are not inculcated here as they should be. Industry, activity, and enterprise are our national good points of character, and these are impressed upon children by example, rather than by admonition; and our virtues, generosity, hospitality, courage, and patriotism, are the virtues of constitution and of circumstance, rather than of education.

We fail to impress the duty of PRUDENCE upon our children, and hence rash and culpable mercantile speculation, ending in insolvency—and hence hasty, inconsiderate marriages, ending in bankruptcy of heart, home, and happiness. We fail to impress the duty of FIDELITY upon our

Digitized by Google

children, and hence irregularity and unfaithfulness in business, embezzlement of funds, &c., and hence broken marriage faith and deserted families.

We fail to inculcate the duty of FORTITUDE, and hence, when obligations, professional or matrimonial, become painful, they are too often abandoned.

But it is PHYSICAL EDUCATION, in its relation to the happiness of married life, that I wish to discuss. We are still more thoughtlessly neglectful, and I was about to say, *fatally* neglectful of physical, than of moral education. *Fatally*, because no moral education can be completely successful, unless assisted and supported by a good physical training.

An instance—preach patience for ever, yet a dyspeptic *will* be ill-tempered.

Another—preach industry for ever, yet the weak and languid *will* be lazy and idle.

A third—inculcate the necessity of courage, presence of mind, by eloquent precept, and by the example of all the heroes and heroines of history, yet the nervous *will* start if a door claps.

One might go on *ad infinitum*.

A defective physical education is one of the primary causes of unhappiness in the marriage relation. A girl cannot be a useful or a happy wife, and she cannot make her husband and her children happy, or even comfortable, unless she be a healthy woman. In Great Britain, a girl in delicate health never expects to be married, and her friends never desire it for her. American girls are proverbially delicate in organization, and frail in health, and their mothers were delicate before them, and their children will be still more delicate after them, unless there is a great reform in physical cultivation. Such a reform is happily beginning in the North. It is yet unthought of here, and in the West and South. Daily exercise by walking, skipping rope, calisthenics, horseback riding, which bring all the limbs and muscles into play; daily bathing in cold water on first rising in the morning; fresh air, simple, plain food, the disuse of coffee and tea, comfortable clothing, the disuse of tight ligatures, corsets, tight-waisted dresses, tight shoes, &c., are the best features of this excellent system of physical training. I believe that a young person with a good constitution to commence with, faithfully following these means for the preservation of health, with the blessing of God, will not fade or break until she is fifty, nor die until she is an hundred years old. I believe that youth, health, beauty, strength, and life can be greatly prolonged beyond their present average, and that we were all intended to live twice or three times as long as with our sad mal-treatment we do live.

American children (with the exception of a very few, whose parents know and practise better) grow up drinking hot tea and coffee, eating hot meats and rich gravies and pastries, never bathing, taking little exercise, confined in crowded school-rooms or close house-rooms, and become narrow-shouldered, hollow-cheeked, pale, sickly, nervous, and fretful; they marry early companions as pale, sickly, nervous, and fretful as themselves, and have children *twice* as pale, sickly, nervous, and fretful as their parents, and discord and other domestic miseries are such inevitable results that we *must* pity, and can scarcely blame the victims. They cry out in their agony for separation, divorce, for reform in social laws, when the truth is, no reform would cure their evils without a reform in their personal habits; such a reform as would give health, consequently good-humor, and lastly, happiness.

Few people consider how much our *moral* as well as our *physical* health depends upon exercise, cleanliness, and temperance. How much our happiness depends upon a free circulation, unobstructed perspiration, and a good digestion. How much domestic discomfort is caused by the querulousness of ill-health. Many a man of weak and unsettled principles is driven to dissipation and vice, and it may be to crime, by the discomforts of his home, of his sickly and nervous wife, fretful and troublesome children.

Another prominent cause of unhappy marriages, is the too unguarded and unrestrained association between young persons of opposite sexes in the same rank of society. If the dress and address of a young man are passable, if his conduct is unimpeachable, and his *prospects fair*, however otherwise unknown and untried, he may be admitted at once to the intimacy of a young lady, and after a brief courtship, *too* brief to give either a knowledge of their own or each other's hearts, take the last irrevocable step—*marriage*. And this youth of fair manners, fair appearance, and fair conduct, may turn out to be, if not positively depraved, yet weak, unstable, untried, possessing the *best reputation*, based upon the morality of externals, rather than the tested, sound integrity of heart; with the most *defective character*, totally unfit to guide himself, still less another, through the shoals and quicksands of life.

In the old times of chivalry, a knight must have proved his prowess before he could successfully aspire to the hand of his lady-love. The days of knight-errantry are long past, but in the age of man, or of the world, the days of moral warfare are never over; never over with the world while it exists; never over with man until death; and I would have some better proof of moral force in an untried young man, than a few weeks of acquaintance, popularity, and mere amiablity of manners would give, before I could trust the temporal and eternal welfare of my daughter to his keeping. When a young girl's heart is lost and won, it is too late for these prudential considerations; in this case, as in every other, the old proverb holds good—*Tidarsi è bene, e non fidarse e meglio*. The conversational acquaintanceship should be prevented from maturing into the dangerous intimacy. Yet do not misunderstand me; I would not have you pain or repulse a young heart by the coldness of suspicion. I would not have you shut yourselves up in a dark distrust, and close your doors, and guard your girls with Eastern jealousy; far from it, one need not run upon Scylla in avoiding Charybdis. "Moderation is the golden thread that holds together the bead-roll of the virtues." I would have you take the middle course—"the golden mean" between jealous surveillance and dangerous neglect. In all other civilized and enlightened society in the world, young ladies are carefully guarded and guided, chaperoned through the mazes of life. In countries of the Eastern continent this system

Digitized by Google

of surveillance is excessive; here, it is reprehensibly deficient; in England it is perfect. I confess I would have our manners resemble the English in *this* respect.

Still another primary cause (I speak only of *primary causes* here, deeming discord, tyranny, drunkenness, infidelity, and desertion so many *effects*), still another primary cause of unhappiness in the marriage state, is that marriage is contracted too early in life. American girls are proverbially married too young; at an age at which even a hearty robust Englishwoman would scarcely be permitted to enter upon the responsibilities of marriage. How much more improper then must it be for an American girl, with her national extreme delicacy of organization, to take upon herself the heavy burdens and onerous duties of matrimony, before her feeble constitution is mature, or her frail strength confirmed. But our girls, with all these natural disadvantages, are married early, and hence the early (*proverbially* again) wasting of health and life; the failing of beauty, decline of grace, and loss of attractions in the women; and hence the vexatious, nervous irritability so common in young mothers, so destructive to domestic harmony and happiness. How can it be otherwise with the continued tax of a young and increasing family upon the immature strength of the youthful wife and mother? Our girls are extremely fragile at best, and will ever be so, aye and will grow more so, unless a better system of physical education is generally adopted. When these delicate girls prematurely assume the cares and burdens of a family, they break down under it, become thin, pale, sickly, nervous, and fretful; no longer attractive, almost repulsive; and the husband, father, if his disposition be benevolent and protective, as is the nature of most American men, suffers martyrdom, devotes himself a living sacrifice to his sickly wife and large family. I know hundreds of such devoted men, all unconscious of their self-devotion, passing their lives in dull counting-houses, dark stores, dingy offices, dirty work-shops, or crowded school-rooms, so cheerfully! to provide a comfortable or a luxurious home where their wives and children ever live, but where they only come to snatch a hasty meal, or late at night to sleep. This, I think, is what Dr. Dewey calls "The Religion of Toil." But if on the other hand this husband of the sickly wife, this father of the peevish children, this victim of early marriage and other abuses, happens to be selfish and unprincipled, he becomes, more or less, tyrant or reprobate, or he sometimes quietly *leaves*, goes to the West or South, to sea, or to parts unknown, and is never heard of again. If he be licentious as well as selfish, his wandering fancies fix upon some younger, fresher, fairer, or some *new* form; then comes the thought of the possibility, the probability, the almost certainty, if he pursues it, of getting a legal enfranchisement from his matrimonial bonds. And this is naturally suggested by the facility with which divorces are granted; true, he cannot legally repudiate his wife while she remains faithful, but he *can* oblige *her* to release him, or break her neck, or her heart, or desert and starve her into compliance with his measures; or he can wrest her children from her, and make their restoration to her bosom the price of his release. I am not exaggerating, reader; if you live in a city, and will look about you, you will find that I speak truly. But to conclude, I reiterate, and insist upon this point, that the fundamental causes of unhappiness in married life, are a defective moral and *physical* education—and a premature contraction of the matrimonial engagement.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE DESERTED WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD MANSION HOUSE.

All day within the dreary house,
The doors upon their hinges creak;
The blue fly sings in the pane—the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot creeps,
Or from the crevice peers about.—TENNYSON.

The wild wind sweeps across the old damp floors,
And makes a weary and a wailing moan,
All night you hear the clap of broken doors,
That on their rusty hinges grate and groan;
And then old voices calling from behind
The worn and wormy wainscot flapping in the wind.
MILLER.

THE character of the first settlers of Maryland and Virginia is known to have been very different from that of the Pilgrim Fathers—as opposite as the idle, gay, and dissolute cavalier to the stern, laborious, and self-denying Puritan. Their purpose in seeking the shores of the Western World was also widely different from that of the first settlers of New England—the object of the latter being spiritual liberty; the end of the former, material wealth. And their history since the first settlement of the country has been as broadly diverse. The children of the Pilgrim Fathers have reached the highest seats in the temples of Fame and Fortune—the descendants of the first aristocratic settlers of Maryland and Virginia have seen themselves outstripped in the path of success and honor by the children of the very menials of their father's house. This is emphatically the case in Maryland. Among the friends and partizans of Lord Baltimore, who sought with him an Eldorado among the rolling hills and lovely vales, and beside the broad and beautiful rivers of Maryland, came many younger sons of the decayed old English nobility and gentry, who thought out of the wealth of the New World to found a name and a family here, that should rival, in power and splendor, the house from which they sprang. They seemed to overlook the fact that this coveted wealth was as yet unreclaimed from the wilderness—that nothing but energy, labor, and perseverance could receive and appropriate it; and even if at first they had observed this, it would have availed them little, for unlike the Pilgrim Fathers, they were deplorably destitute of these natural and necessary qualifications for success in a new and unsubdued world.

With all their old ancestral pride, they also brought to these shores those habits of idleness, dissipation, and reckless expenditure which had been so destructive to their fortunes in the old country. Many succeeded in securing from the wilderness large estates, and upon them they erected handsome edifices,—the bricks, glass, and other materials for which were mostly imported from England to Baltimore, and brought down the Potomac or Patuxent rivers to the site selected for building (so little available then to these settlers were the fine resources of the country). Some of these old mansion houses are yet standing,* but like the families that own them, much decayed, and remaining merely as memorials of past grandeur. The descendants of these first settlers of Maryland and Virginia are the proudest, and *some* of them, alas! the poorest of the citizens of these States. These people are *sui generis*—unlike any other people I ever saw or read of. Each planter on his own estate, great or small, productive or barren, is prouder, and more thoroughly convinced of his own immense personal importance, than any throned, crowned, and sceptred monarch in Christendom or Heatheness. With all this, they are brave, generous, gallant, and hospitable, even to extravagance. It has been entered as a complaint against the older counties of Maryland and Virginia, that the taverns are wretched, and how can it be helped? Tavern-keeping is a poor business there, because the doors of every planter's house fly open to receive the traveller who passes near his gates—and a welcome is extended to him with the cheerful, genial warmth of a country gentleman to whom the exercise of hospitality is a delight as well as a duty. It is a very common thing to see a perfect stranger ride up to the gate of a Maryland or Virginia planter's farm yard, with the purpose of remaining all night—or a week, if his convenience requires it—and he is sure of a welcome, as long as he pleases to stay—for him the "fatted calf" is killed, for him the butt of cordial broached.

Northern and Western men who occasionally happen to travel through the lower counties of these States, put up at poor taverns, and go away to abuse the half-savage state of society there. They should rather present themselves at some planter's house, where they would be received with the best, as a matter of course, and invited, if it were spring, to a fish feast upon the banks of the nearest river, or, if it were autumn, to a deer hunt. Let idlers who are *ennuyés* to death with the common-places of their daily life, just take a country road tour through the lower counties of Maryland and Virginia, and they will find themselves transported to the associations of two centuries ago, among the oldest-fashioned people, with the oldest-fashioned houses, furniture, and manners in the world.

Down on the western shore of Maryland is a heath containing about five hundred acres—upon which stands an old mansion-house, in ruins,

* We have one in Washington. It is an old ruin—some hundred years older than the city—and stands near the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia. It is haunted, of course.

Digitized by Google

both of which I wish to describe. This heath is bounded on the North by the river P., on the South by Sachem's Creek, on the West by a deep, dense forest, and on the East by the Chesapeake Bay. The heath rises gradually from the bay, and is relieved by clumps of pine and cedar trees, standing between the swells of ground as it rolls back from the water towards the forest, while towards the North the ground rises and sharpens into a steep promontory, sticking out between the junction of the river with the bay. Crowning the summit of this promontory, is a large, square, red brick old mansion house. Around this house wave tall, gloomy old Lombardy poplars—like sable plumes around a hearse. Around the shores of the promontory runs a half-ruined low brick wall, inclosing the garden attached to the mansion. This garden is grown up with weeds and thistles. This estate was known by the name of The Heath, or Heath Hall, and had continued in the possession of the Churchill family since the first settlement of Maryland.

On the opposite point of the mouth of the river was the struggling little village of Churchill Point,—a great colonial seaport town, withered in the germ—now only an occasional depot for tobacco raised in the immediate neighborhood, and shipped thence to Baltimore by the little packets that traded up and down the river, and sometimes stopped there to take in freight. A large old barn of a storehouse, where produce was left till carried away—a large, old, white-framed tavern, half-furnished, where passengers went to meet the packets, a blacksmith's shop, a country merchant's store, a post-office, kept by the widow of the late post-master, a few cottages, tenanted by wool, cotton, and flax dyers, by domestic counterpane and carpet weavers, and other country laborers, made up the staple of the village. About a quarter of a mile back from the village, in a clearing in the forest, stood the Episcopal Church of the Crucifixion. Divine service was performed here only once a fortnight, as the pastor had two parishes under his charge.*

To return to Churchill Hall. This estate had once been highly valuable, both as to size and productiveness. Running over its natural boundaries, it extended beyond the river and creek, and for miles into the forest behind—and for fertility it was called the garden spot of Maryland. But many acres had passed from the possession of the family, and what was left was worn out by that wretched system of agriculture which has ruined the once highly productive lands of Maryland. I mean the continual drain upon the resources of the soil, without ever giving it rest or food; sowing a field years at a stretch, without giving it the repose of a single season, or the nutriment of a single bushel of manure. All that was left of the once beautiful farm was the sterile heath and ruined Hall I have described, when the estate, by the death of his father, passed into the possession of Ignatius, the last heir of the Churchills, who, and his two sisters, Sophie and Rosalie, were the only remaining members of the family. His poverty and his incumbrances did not prevent him from loving and marrying a beautiful girl in his neighborhood, Agatha Gormon, who left a luxurious home to share his poverty in the ruined Hall at the Heath; nor could his love save her from death, when, in the second year of her marriage, she passed away, leaving an infant daughter of a day old. He had loved her with an exclusive, absorbing passion, and from the hour of her sudden death he pined away, and in less than a year thereafter was laid in her grave—opened to receive him. The orphan heiress of a ruin and a desert, the infant Agatha—or, as from her wild, dark beauty, she was nicknamed, *Hagar*—was left in charge of his sisters. These ladies, though poor, were quite comfortable. The lower rooms of the old house were kept in tolerable order. Their table was supplied by the garden, the dairy, and the river, which afforded excellent fish, crabs, and oysters—while their pocket money was supplied by the hire of several negroes owned by them. The girls were beautiful—and, poor as they were, it was thought not impossible that they might marry well. The elder sister, Rosalie, was a merry, plump, golden-haired, blue-eyed lassie, with a complexion that the country beaux compared to strawberries and cream—she was the first to fulfil the happy auguries drawn for her. She was seen by a young merchant of Baltimore, who happened to have business at Churchill's Point, and after rather a short courtship, she was wedded and carried off to the city home of her husband. Sophie Churchill, now bereaved and alone at seventeen, devoted herself with all the enthusiasm of her ardent, loving nature, to the care and education of her infant niece, and little Hagar grew passionately fond of her aunt. Her sole domestic was an old woman, a pure Guinea negress, who, seventy years before, in her childhood, had been torn from her native coast, brought to this country, and sold. She had served the Churchill family for three generations, and was nearly eighty years old—yet with the strong tenacity of life distinguishing the native African, she still kept up and at work, seemingly in all her mid-life vigor. Now, reader, I am telling you no invented story—so do you not think that there was something slightly romantic about the position of this young girl, left with the charge of an infant, living in an old ruin, on a bleak shore, and having no other companion or attendant but the old Guinea negress? *Real life* is full of the picturesque and the romantic. I have never yet needed to cull flowers from the fields of imagination. The gardens of memory and tradition will furnish materials for a life of romance writing.

* This is frequently the case, even at this day, in remote counties of Maryland.

CHAPTER II.

THE MINISTER.

"——— Gentleness
And a strange strength, a calm o'erruling strength,
Are mixed within him so that neither take
Possession from the other—neither rise
In mastery or passion—but both grow
Harmoniously together." W. G. Simms.

Sophie Churchill was a pretty girl of round *petite* form, of clear pale olive complexion, large,

Digitized by Google

soft brown eyes, and dark chestnut hair. Had her position been different she would have been much admired and courted—as it was she was neglected and even slandered—yes, slandered—after the death of her brother, and the marriage of her only sister, she had, in pure ignorance of the world, kept up exactly the same manner of life as before. Instead of engaging some respectable elderly female as housekeeper and companion (which indeed her limited means did not allow), she preferred remaining alone, and continued to receive the visits not only of ladies, which of course was in perfect propriety, but of *gentlemen*—that is to say, of her own and her father's familiar friends—the sons and brothers of their near neighbors, who testified their remembrance of the dead, and their respect for the living, by sometimes calling to see Sophie and her little charge, and by sometimes bringing her a brace of wild fowl, a pair of pigeons, or some other such game from their morning sport upon the moor; until at last they found that their well-meant kindness to the young and pretty orphan was subjecting her to the invidious remarks of all the thoughtless or the malicious gossips of the neighborhood. Then their occasional visits were discontinued, and the poor girl was left almost entirely alone, especially as the advancing winter and the increasing severity of the weather precluded the visits of *ladies* to that desolate heath. And desolate indeed it was upon this first winter that Sophie passed alone at the Hall.

As early as the first of December the river was frozen over. With the thoughtlessness of a young girl upon whom the cares of housekeeping were exclusively and suddenly thrown, she had neglected to provide for the exigencies of the severe winters of that particular locality. She had even from delicacy omitted to send for the wages of the few negroes out on hire—and the first of December, when the ground was two feet deep in snow, and the river was a solid block of ice, and even the bay near the shore was crusted over, found Sophie Churchill destitute of the common necessaries of life. To augment the evils of her position, the old negress—who in health was in herself a host—was laid up with the rheumatism. At this time Sophie was so poor that her little charge (now three years old) possessed but one suit of clothes; and every night, after putting the little one to bed, would Sophie go, up to her knees in snow, away off to the forest, a quarter of a mile distant, to collect brush, to supply the fire the next day—her little arms and moderate strength serving to bring so small a quantity at a time that she would have to make this trip half-a-dozen times a night before a sufficient quantity was collected. Then she would have to take the bucket and go to a dell in the same forest to bring water, and after coming home would take the sleeping Hagar's only suit of clothes and wash and iron them for the next day, solaced while at her work by the mutterings of the old negress, who, with the irritability of sickness, would growl from her lair—

"Oh, ho! kin tote water, kin you—thought how you was to *deleky* an' *saft* (*delicate and soft*, to tote water from de spring," &c., &c.

Sophie never paid the slightest attention to this ill-temper; she seemed not to hear it. It was remarkable that Sophie never once in the whole course of her life was heard to utter a complaint, lay a charge, or make a reproach; and that she was perfectly unconscious of the moral beauty of her own patience. She merely acted out her own nature without thinking about it.

Sophie had one faithful friend in the aged pastor of the parish—but he, with his multifarious duties, could seldom find time to visit her. The Rev. Senex May, with his young wife and only child, lived in a pretty cottage on the other side of the river, in a grove half way between the village and the forest. His youthful wife, Emily Wilde, had been an orphan, a governess from New England, living in the family of a wealthy planter in the neighborhood. Weary of her friendless, homeless, and unsettled life, she had given her hand where her deepest reverence had long been bestowed, and was very happy as "the old man's darling." One child, a boy, had blessed this singular union.

Mr. May and Emily did not surmise the deep destitution into which Sophie Churchill had fallen. The deep snow and severe cold had prevented them for several weeks from crossing the river to see her.

At last the weather moderated, the snow melted, the ice-bound river was freed, a mild dry wind from the South sprang up and dried the ground, the roads became passable, and the long confined and dreadfully wearied country neighbors geared up their vehicles of various sorts, from the ox-cart to the coach and pair, and from the ass's colt to the high bred courser, and went "a-visiting."

It was about ten o'clock in the morning of a beautiful winter's day, that Sophie caught a glimpse through the window of the old parson on his old horse, with Emily seated on a pillion behind him, with her arms around his waist. Sophie sprang to meet and greet them—and—

"I knew you'd come! I *knew* you would," she said, as she held up her hands to assist Emily, who sprang from the pillion into her arms. And she burst into tears as she received her.

Poor girl! she had been so lonesome, for *so* long.

After greeting Mr. May, she drew Emily's arm within her own and led the way to the house, while the old parson ambled leisurely up to the horse-block, alighted, and followed them. When they were seated in the parlor, and Emily had taken Hagar upon her lap and filled her apron with the home-made cakes she had brought, Mr. May turned to Sophie, and stroking her brown hair, inquired—

"How has my little partridge contrived to live through this long, hard winter?"

Sophie Churchill was thoroughly ingenuous, and in reply she gave a simple narrative of her life since the setting in of the winter.

It was beautiful to observe, that during her narrative she had uttered no one word of reflection or reproach against the friends and neighbors who had so cruelly neglected her. She merely told without complaint, the simple story of her sufferings as a duty, in answer to her venerated pastor's question. He heard with emotion—and—

Digitized by Google

"Poor 'stricken deer'—poor shorn lamb—aye! shorn to the very 'quick,'" he said.

At the conclusion of her story—

"The Lord loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth," he said, reverently. And then he arose and walked soberly and thoughtfully up and down the floor with his hands clasped behind his back.

He was a round, stout old gentleman, wore short breeches and silk stockings, and had his grey hair parted over his venerable brow, smoothed back and plaited in a queue behind; so you may readily fancy him as he paced up and down the floor with his hands clasped behind him and his head bowed upon his chest, while he seemed to be revolving some plan.

While he walked, Emily sat and played with Hagar on her lap; at last turning to Miss Churchill she said,—

"Do you know, Sophie, that I am not contented at all—that I am very *dis*contented? I want a little girl!—I want a little girl *so bad!* I want one to dress, and to fix, and to play with. My boy is eight years old, and far too big to be dressed in trimmed clothes—too much of a man, in his own and his father's opinion, to wear anything but a plain broadcloth jacket and trousers. And I do *so* love to make and trim children's clothes. I never go into a dry goods store and see remnants of pretty calico or merino, but I think what sweet frocks for a little girl they would make. Last fall I bought some pretty remnants of crimson merino and orange-colored bombazine, and a bunch of narrow black worsted braid to trim with, just for a notion—don't laugh at me, Sophie; and so this winter, while confined to the house by the dreadful weather, I passed some of the dreary evenings pleasantly in making and trimming some little dresses, and as I had no little girl to wear them I made them to fit *your* little girl, Sophie. Here they are—try one of them on her—*please* try one of them on her—I want to see how they look *so much!*"

And opening her travelling satchel she produced with glee four beautiful little dresses suitable for winter—a crimson, and a green merino, and a blue, and an orange bombazine.

"And that ain't all," said she, diving into her satchel; "I have made half-a-dozen nice little petticoats, and half-a-dozen pair of pantalets, and I have trimmed them with thread edging, and, to complete the wardrobe, I bought four pairs of little shoes to match in colors each of the four dresses; and I have half finished at home a little black velvet pelisse and a little black plush hat, into which I intend to stick a small white plume. Won't our little girl be nice, Sophie?"

Emily's black eyes were dancing as she dashed back the black ringlets that kept falling over her face, while she stooped over the basket and looked up for a reply.

It was just Sophie Churchill's character to receive this favor with all the simple, artless frankness with which it was offered. She expressed no surprise—spoke no thanks; she only passed her hand around Emily's neck, turned her face around to meet her own, bent forward, and kissed her lips.

"There! Now, Sophie, let us go into your chamber and dress her," said Emily, setting Hagar off her lap, and beginning to replace the articles in the satchel, and rising to go upstairs. But her husband now approached her, and laying his hand affectionately on the top of her head, pressed her down into her seat, and took the chair by her side, saying,—

"Emily, how would you like to have your friend Miss Churchill always with you?"

"Oh! I should be delighted—enchanted!"

"Of course—so I supposed, my dear. Come here, Sophie, my child!"

Sophie was at the side-board, taking out some apples. She replaced them, however, and went up to her pastor.

"Sophie," said the old man, "I have to ask your forgiveness, child. I have sadly neglected my duty as your pastor. I should have seen that you were comfortably provided for. Do you forgive me, child?" said he, passing his arm around her waist, and drawing her up to him.

Sophie looked at her pastor with embarrassed surprise, and blushed up to her eyes. It seemed to her such an inversion of all order for her venerated pastor to ask *her* forgiveness. She only raised his hand to her lips in silent reverence, then stood before him waiting his further communication.

He passed his hand once or twice across his brow, and looked at Emily with imploring embarrassment; but Emily could not or would not come to his assistance, when he said,—

"Sophie Churchill, my dear, it is neither proper for you to live in this ruined old house in this sterile heath, nor is it christian in me to permit it. And now you say that people have been speaking ill of you—and you tell me this, without excitement, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, and you tell me that in consequence you are quite neglected, without resentment, as though it were the justest fate on earth. This must not go on so—Sophie, will you come and live with us? I do not ask you in any way to become dependent upon me, for, alas! I know too well the unconquerable pride of the Churchills of Heath Hall!" and he smiled with a half reproving, half caressing air. "This property well-managed is quite enough to support you and your little charge very handsomely. But *you* cannot manage it! Now, Miss Churchill, what I wish is, to unite the little families of Heath Hall and Grove Cottage. You and Hagar shall come and live with us at Grove Cottage nine months in the year. I will repair and re-furnish a part of this old Hall, and we will all come down here for sea-bathing during the three summer months. I will also beg the privilege of catching fish, crabs, and oysters from your fishing landing here—and of shooting wild fowl on your moor. I will take upon myself the collection of all your out-standing debts, paying them into your own hands. Come, Miss Churchill! what say you to this plan of uniting our families? Though just now, for the first time, proposed to Emily—the project is very near to her heart. She needs a companion near her own age and of her own sex, and will be delighted to have you with her, especially as she can then have a 'little girl to dress and fix,'" said he smiling—

"Oh! did *you* hear that?" laughed Emily.

"Yes, my darling! I heard *that*. Well,

Digitized by Google

Sophie," he said, turning anxiously to Miss Churchill.

He need not have beat about the subject so long, as fearing difficulty with Miss Churchill. Sophie was too natural, too simple, frank, and entirely unworldly to feel any doubts, fears, or scruples upon the subject. Her pastor proposed the plan—and that fact carried with it a weight of authority that would have constrained her acceptance of a much less agreeable proposition—for in her heart she liked this project—the only drawback being her dislike to leave as her home, the Hall of her own and her fathers' nativity. She expressed her glad acquiescence in the plan—and Emily sealed the contract with a kiss on her brow. "Now, Emily, my darling, we will hurry home—the sooner that we may begin to fit up the rooms for Miss Churchill. This is Monday—by Saturday, Miss Churchill, we shall be ready for you—and on Saturday morning Emily shall drive over and fetch you and Hagar, so that we may all go to church together on Sunday. As for this old hall, it can be shut up for the present and left in charge of old Cumbo, who, Guinea nigger like, is never half so happy as when left entirely alone. You will like our little lad, as well as Emily loves your little girl, Miss Churchill—you could not help it if you were to try, my dear—and you and Emily and the children will be very happy—if I can make you so—for I love to see happy faces about me."

The old man smiled gravely and sweetly as he said this, and arose to take leave.

"Mind, dear Sophie," said Emily, "*we* shall be ready—do *you* be ready also—for I will be sure to be at your door early on Saturday morning."

"If it be the will of God," said the pastor.

"Oh! certainly, I always *mean that*," said Emily.

"Always *say* it then, my dear—somehow or other my heart sank within me as I heard you promise so confidently to be here on Saturday morning. Alas! who can tell? Some of us may be in our graves Saturday morning!" A shadow had fallen on his brow. The two young women felt serious. He recovered himself with an effort, saying, "I must not darken young hearts with my gloom! Come! smile, Emily. Bid your friend good by—and know that every event is ordered by infinite wisdom and love." And they took leave and rode away.

CHAPTER III.

DEATH.

"Why should death be linked with fear?
A single breath—a low drawn sigh,
Can break the ties that bind us here,
And waft the spirit to the sky."

MRS. WELBY.

THE pastor's home was a pretty little white cottage, with green blinds, nestled among the trees from which it took its name. A piazza ran all around it. In summer, vines were trained to run above the window of the cottage and around the post of the piazza—and whole parterres of white lilies (Emily's favorite flower) filled the air with fragrance. Just at this season the scene was rather bleak. The surrounding trees and overhanging vines but added by the nakedness of their branches to the dreariness of the aspect. The cottage was of one story—consisting of a middle building with two wings. In the middle part, first was an entry parallel with the front of the house. At each end of this entry was a door leading into the little wings, each of which contained a bed-chamber. These chambers had each a large bow window fronting on the piazza. The left hand room was occupied by the pastor and his wife, and the right hand one was fitted up for the reception of Sophie Churchill and her little charge. Behind each of these chambers was a little closet—that communicating with Emily's room was occupied by her son; that opening from the room prepared for Sophie, was assigned to the use of their only domestic, a mulatto girl. The centre building contained, first in front a parlor, back of that a dining-room, then a kitchen. Behind the house was a vegetable garden, and a poultry yard—and still further behind an orchard of various fruits. In front of the cottage was a flower yard, and a grape walk extended from the front of the piazza quite down to the gate. Bee-hives were standing under the locust trees that were scattered over the lawn.

Emily was a great housekeeper—and her parlor was a model of comfort. There were no framed pictures. The walls were covered with a landscape paper (*engraved*, not colored) representing the neighborhood of Jerusalem and scenes in the life of the Saviour. On the wall, on one side of the fire-place, was Christ blessing little children—on the other Christ at the marriage at Cana—the figures were nearly as large as life. Emily loved them like familiar friends—and this paper was a favorite with the old man because its grave hue, assisted by the slate-colored moreen curtains at the windows, and the slate-colored coverings of the lounges and easy chairs, shed a sober clerical sort of air over the room. The mantel-piece was of dark grey marble, and the very andirons, fender, &c., had no glaring brass about them, but were made of polished steel. A large and well filled book-case stood at the end of the room opposite the fireplace—a bronze bust of John Huss stood upon the top of it. *That* was the old man's hero. On Friday morning succeeding their visit to Heath Hall—this parlor was in its highest state of perfection—everything glittered with a sober polished steel sort of brilliancy—like a "friend's" wit and humor. They were ready for Miss Churchill. Sophie at the Hall was preparing for her removal—all her small effects and Hagar's slender stock of clothing were put in order and packed. On Friday morning they were quite ready. On Friday morning Mrs. May's maid rode over on a side-saddle and carried a note to Sophie Churchill. The note was from Emily, of course, and ran thus—

"Come, my little partridge, are you ready to fly?—your nest in the grove is quite ready—the sweetest little nest you ever saw. I have put up white muslin curtains to your bed and windows, laid down a new home-made carpet on your floor, whitened your hearth, and hung your favorite picture of the Madonna and child over the chimney-piece. Kitty and I have made some seed cakes to-day—and Mr. May has just received from Baltimore Scott's new novel of 'Ivanhoe.' I

Digitized by Google

await your arrival to cut the leaves—shall we not be happy to-morrow? I have borrowed Mrs. Gardener Green's carryall and shall be at your door by seven in the morning. I design that you shall breakfast with us, so be ready for migration, my bird.

"EMILY."

That night Emily retired to rest so full of thoughts of the morrow that she could not sleep. For one thing she feared that she should not wake early enough—her very bonnet and cloak were laid out ready to be put on when she should first get up; and then she was afraid her buckwheat cakes might not rise well on account of the cold, and *terribly* afraid lest the cloud that obscured the moon should bring rain the next morning. At last she fell asleep, and it seemed to her that she had but just lost herself when she was aroused by a soft hand laid on her face. She threw up her own hand, half unconsciously, to remove it, when she heard her husband say, in feeble tones, "Emily, I am dying; get up, child." She started up in vague alarm, for she was yet but half awake, struck a light, and passing around to the other side of the bed, let it shine in his face. His features were frightfully drawn and haggard, as though by a recent fit of agonizing pain—his voice was quiet, as he said,—

"Blow out the candle, child, and open the window-shutters to let the moonbeams in, and come and sit by me, Emily." She was wide enough awake now, and trembling in every limb, while she gazed upon that contorted countenance, and marked while he spoke the frightful ruin an hour had made of it.

"You are ill—very ill!—let me call up Kitty and send for a physician," said she, setting down the candle, and running to the door. He recalled her.

"My Emily, come here—let Kitty sleep—do not disturb the household—send for no one, I insist—a college of doctors could not save me. My Emily, blow out the candle—it hurts me; there—now open the shutters so that I can see out into the free sky. Thank you, child. Now, Emily, wrap yourself in your cloak, and come and take this seat by my side."

Trembling with grief and terror, she did all that he requested, and finally, as she took the chair at the head of the bed, said,—

"Oh, do give me leave to send for a physician—you have been in a fit or in agonizing pain, and may be so again; *do* let me send for a physician."

"My child, whom would you send? Dr. Howe lives fourteen miles off; can you send Kitty at night so far?"

"Oh! I could send her over to the village to knock up Mr. Green or some of the men, who will saddle a horse and go—do let me!"

"Emily, before a messenger could *go*, much less *return* with the doctor, it would be too late. Stay—do not leave me! I charge you do not leave me!"

He grasped her hand convulsively, as a spasm beginning in his left shoulder and arm shook fearfully his whole person. Emily gazed, pale and cold as lead, and twice started up to call assistance, when both times the hand of the convulsed man tightened upon her wrist, and retained her in her seat. The fit at last was over, and he was looking into Emily's face.

"Oh! *what* can I do for you?" she cried, "*do—do—do* let me try something." She was too much shocked for tears.

"Do *only* what I ask of you, dear child—stay by me. I am dying, Emily."

"No, no! *not* dying, but *ill*—very ill. Oh, *what* is the matter with you?"

Now her tears gushed forth.

"Control yourself, Emily—you can do it. *This* is my disease, *angina pectoris*. I have been threatened with it long—it will do its office to-night. One or two more such convulsions as that and my soul will be released—released! Only think of that! Free to traverse the boundless realms of air! Stupendous it seems to me—I cannot fully realize it. One hour convulsed and agonizing here, the next beyond the most distant star we see. One moment your pale face fades from my eyes, the next the divine glory of the Saviour's countenance bursts upon my vision!"

A terrible convulsion now seized and shook his frame; he held Emily's hand as before—the fit passed.

"You will weep for the old man a few days, Emily, and only a few days. At first you will feel very desolate and helpless, but you will soon recover from that, and find an absorbing object in your son for a time—*that* may also pass, for you are young."

"Shall I not awake Augustus?" asked Emily, through her streaming tears.

"No, child. Do not let him look, young as he is, upon the terrors of a death like this—a death of physical anguish. I looked over him as he lay in his cot to-night and blessed him in his sleep. That is sufficient."

The muscles of his face and hands began to twitch—he struggled and writhed in another strong spasm. When that was over, and he had grown quite calm, he raised his feeble hands, and parting the soft dark hair from her white forehead, he said,—

"I bless you, Emily—I bless you and you shall be blessed—blessed in your son, blessed in your friends, blessed in yourself, and blessed in your God."

A convulsion stronger and longer in continuance than any that had preceded it threatened his immediate dissolution. When, at last, it slowly and interruptedly subsided, his features settled into the fixity of death. He did not speak again, his respiration was labored and painful, and only when Emily attempted to move would he give any sign of consciousness by feebly trying to tighten his hold upon her hand; at last that hold relaxed, the respiration ceased, and the freed soul "migrated to the Great Secret." Emily was calm and quiet now. She laid the venerable hands together over his bosom, composed the limbs, closed the eyes, and straightened the white coverlet of the bed. Then she resumed her seat and her watch until the morning dawned, then dressing herself, she went into the sleeping closet of Kitty, aroused her, told her what had happened, and sent her to the village to procure assistance. By sunrise the cottage was half-full of sympathizing neighbors. The pastor's funeral took place on the fourth day after his death. The successor of the pastor had arrived in time to perform the funeral ceremonies, and after that was over remained as a temporary guest at the Grove. All plans of re-

Digitized by Google

moving thither were for the present abandoned by Sophie Churchill.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRANGER.

"Erect, morose, determined, solemn, slow—
Who knows the man can never cease to know."
CRABBE.

"A fearful sign stands in thy house of life—
An enemy;—a fiend lurks close behind
The radiance of thy planet—oh! be warned!"
COLERIDGE.

THE Rev. John Huss Withers. He had been recommended to the parish as his successor in case of his own demise by Mr. May. He had been a student some twenty years back with the old gentleman—within the last eight or ten years he had had charge of a congregation in one of the Northern cities. Very lately his charge had been resigned—and, in reply to a letter written by Mr. May, inquiring his reason for his resignation, he alleged the cause to be—domestic affliction—the *loss* of his wife. The old pastor wrote back a letter full of sympathy, and attempted consolation, and then the correspondence was suffered to drop. There was no telling how much the mere circumstance of his given name, "John Huss," affected the partiality of the old man in his favor.

Certainly when he appeared at the grove, there was nothing very winning in his looks. During the funeral ceremonies, Mrs. May and Miss Churchill had scarcely observed him, absorbed as they were in thoughts of the dead. After the return from the burial ground—after Emily and Sophie had laid off their bonnets in Miss Churchill's room, Emily said—

"You must stay with us at least a week or two, Sophie—and we must share together this room that I proposed for you—I will have the crib brought down from the loft and put by the side of our bed for little Hagar. One room *must* be given up to the use of our boarder, Mr. Withers, and I prefer to let him have mine, for its distressing associations affect my nerves dreadfully."

"Then the new preacher is to board with you, Emily?"

"Yes, my love, for many good, *very good* reasons—first, he was my husband's friend, and then I am afraid to live here by myself, or I mean without a man about the place; and then the old ladies all tell me that I must receive him because it is so convenient to the church."

For her life, Sophie Churchill could not have explained the cause of the oppression that settled upon her heart, or the deep sigh that revealed the burden on her spirits without throwing it off. They went into the parlor, that was unoccupied, but glittering with its sober, polished steel lustre, and took seats; Emily, in the slate-colored damask easy chair, and Sophie upon the lounge of the same grave hue. By nothing could you have guessed the late presence of so gloomy a visitor as death in that sober but cheerful room.

Emily, by the expressed wish of her late husband, wore no mourning—her dress was that she always wore in-doors—a soft and full white muslin wrapper, descending from her full bust, and gathered around her slender waist by a cord and tassel. Her soft, silky black hair was parted over her forehead, and hung in thick ringlets that scarcely reached her bosom—she leaned back serenely with her hands resting on the arms of the slate-colored chair. Sophie Churchill's clear olive complexion looked almost fair, contrasted with her smoothly braided brown hair, her large, melancholy brown eyes, and her brown silk dress. Sophie leaned over the elbow of the lounge towards her friend, whose chair was near that end. Kitty came in to lay the cloth for tea, and soon a round table stood on the floor covered by a snow-white damask cloth, white china tea service, and the nice light bread and hard golden-hued butter, and clear honey, with the seed cakes of Emily's preparation. The tea was placed upon the table and their boarder summoned from the piazza, where he had been promenading. He came in.

He came in, lifting his hat from his head, and placing it upon a side stand, slowly and gravely assumed the seat at the foot of the table where Emily and Sophie were already seated. They raised their eyes simultaneously to look at him, and at once the whole aspect of the room seemed changed—a funeral solemnity gathered over it. Sophie, attracted by one of those strange spells exercised by objects of terror over us, could not keep her large startled eyes off him—at last he raised his head and looked her full in the face—her eyes fell, and a visible shudder shook her frame—a just perceptible smile writhed the corner of his mouth as he withdrew his gaze from her. Sophie did not open her mouth to speak during the meal; Emily dispensed her hospitalities with her usual graceful ease. At the end of tea they arose, Kitty entered and cleared the table, and Mrs. May, making an apology, left the room to attend to some domestic matters. Sophie was now alone with the new preacher. She resumed her seat at the end of the lounge, he took the easy chair just vacated by Emily, and drawing it closer to the side of Miss Churchill, he stooped forward and inquired in his singularly sweet tones—

"You live in this neighborhood, Miss Churchill?"

"Yes, sir," she said, and her eyes dropped, and the blood mounted to her brow, and receding, left it pale—again that singular smile curled the corner of his lip.

"Far from this, Miss Churchill?"

"I live at Heath Hall."

"Ah! and nearly quite alone, Miss Churchill, with only one aged female domestic and an infant—"

"And *God!*" said Sophie, raising her eyes confidently to meet his; but the brilliant, basilisk, greenish grey eyes seemed to freeze her eyeballs, and she dropped their sheltering lids again—yet she felt the glance of those glittering, cold, keen eyes entering her heart, and a chill, an icy chill, ran through all her veins. She started up and sought Emily.

Emily was in the next room, the dining room, where, seated in two little chairs at a little child's table, covered with a white cloth, appeared the

Digitized by Google

children, Gusty and Hagar, eating their supper of milk and sweetmeats. The children were at each end of the table, and Emily was kneeling at the side with an arm lightly clasped around each—she had just thus embraced the orphans, and a tear was glistening in her eye. She arose as Sophie entered, and said—

"Why have you left the room, my love; it was so rude to Mr. Withers?"

"Because I don't like to stay with him—do *you?* How do *you* like him, Emily?"

"Well, dear, I don't know. I have scarcely had an opportunity of seeing yet—he is grave, grave to austerity, yet that, though it may awe young maidens, can scarcely be deemed a fault in the Pastor of the Crucifixion Parish."

"Oh! it was not that—it was not that!"

"What was it then, my frightened dove?"

"I could not tell you! You wouldn't understand! *He has never looked at you—never spoken to you.*"

"How you do talk at random, child—we conversed at tea."

"*He has never looked at you and never spoken to you!*"

"My dear, you are hysterical—I must give you some morphine." She went to a cupboard. But the wild fluttering of Sophie's startled heart subsided—she refused the morphine, and at last they returned to the parlor.

The next day was Good Friday, and of course there was service at the church, and the Rev. John Huss Withers was to preach his first sermon. Reader, do you happen to know what a great event the arrival of a new preacher is in a country neighborhood? Not only does the parish over which he is installed as minister, but every surrounding parish, forsake their own especial minister to flock to hear him.

At an early hour two horses stood saddled at the gate of Grove Cottage, and the minister, Sophie, Emily, and her son, sallied out to mount them. When Sophie saw but two horses saddled, and knew that there were four persons to go to church, she looked with embarrassment at Emily.

"You are to ride on a pillion behind Mr. Withers, Miss Churchill—and Gusty is to ride behind me."

The parson was already mounted, and before Sophie had time to reply, he rode up to where she was standing on the horse-block, stooped his giant arm, and lifting her lightly to the pillion, drew her arms around his waist and cantered off. Earth and sky swam together in Sophie's vision as they went. Emily was in her saddle, and Kitty lifted up and set her boy behind her, and then taking the infant Hagar in her arms went into the house. Emily paced soberly along—Master Gusty was quarrelling all the way, asserting that it was *his* right to ride and his mother ought to sit behind *him*, like the parson and Miss Sophie. Mr. Withers was waiting for them in the shadow of the forest just at its entrance. At another time Emily could scarcely have suppressed a smile at seeing the cold, dead white face and dilated eyes of Sophie Churchill, with her fingers, which spell-bound she scarcely durst withdraw, stiff and pale as tallow candles thrown into strong relief upon the black broadcloth of the parson's coat.

"Where are your gloves, Miss Churchill?" said Emily.

"I had not drawn them on, and I lost them on our ride. *I want to get down and go back and get them,*" said Sophie, in an imploring voice.

"Mrs. May—ride forward, madam, and I will canter back with Miss Churchill in search of her gloves!"

"No, no, no! no, I thank you!—it will be too late," gasped Sophie—but even while she spoke he had wheeled his horse and was going back.

"You should not have named your wish *to get down* and return then," said he, in his sweet, dear tones. They had ridden back about an eighth of a mile when Sophie, anxious to rejoin her other companions, said—

"I think I lost my gloves about here."

Mr. Withers alighted, and placing the reins and his riding whip in the hands of Miss Churchill, favored the poor girl with a look full in the face that froze the blood in her veins. She thought of the long ride they would now have to take through the forest alone, and her heart died within her. She watched him, nervously saw him pick up the gloves and turn to approach, she looked at him with the eyes of a startled fawn ready for flight—she met the same basilisk gaze—it maddened her—suddenly jerking the bit and putting whip to her horse, she sped from the spot like an arrow from a bow, and fled across the common with a vague idea of reaching her own home—he shouted:

"The horse is running away with you! rein up your horse," and flew after her. She reached the banks of the river—gave one frightened look behind, and madly urged her steed down the bank and into the rushing water swollen by the recent thaw. The water was deep, and her steed floundered and struggled with the waves just as Withers appeared at the top of the bank—sped down—dashed into the water and seizing the rein swayed the horse around—drew him to the beach, and led him dripping and struggling up the bank. When they were once more on firm, high ground, he paused to breathe the horse; the water was dripping from the dress of Sophie, and her wet clothes were clinging tightly about her limbs. He leaned upon his elbow upon the pommel of her saddle and said, gravely,

"You are an interesting young lady, Miss Churchill; your feats of horsemanship are surprising."

Sophie's sudden plunge-bath, and the real danger she had passed, had somewhat restored the tone of her nervous system by putting to flight her imaginary terrors. The horse had now recovered his wind and they set forward, the preacher leading the horse—they reached the cottage gate—he assisted Sophie to alight—as she reached the ground she said—

"You had better push forward to church, Mr. Withers; you will be too late."

He took his watch calmly from his pocket and holding it near her face, said—

"See, it wants a quarter to nine o'clock; if you hurry and change your dress we can get there in time."

"I am not going, sir."

"Then I shall stay home to take care of you—you need care after this morning's adventure,"

Digitized by Google

and so saying, he quietly began to unsaddle the horse.

"Stop, I will go," said Sophie, choosing the lighter evil, and she hurried in to change her dress.

"What has happened, sir?" said Kitty, coming out.

"The horse ran away with Miss Churchill," replied he.

Sophie now returned arrayed in a black silk, and was lifted tremblingly into her seat. They then set off at a brisk canter and soon entered the forest. Reader, do you like a dark forest road? If so, you would have been delighted with the forest road leading to this church, winding now through a deep dell where the branches met over head, and now up a steep hill over which the trees were thinly scattered. They had just entered a dark walk from which the thick overhanging branches excluded nearly every ray of light when Sophie, turning her head aside, her eyes fell upon some object couched in the underwood, her gaze was riveted, her eyes dilated, her lips fell apart, her face became ashy pale, and then a half suppressed cry burst from her lips. The parson halted—turned around in his saddle—

"What is the matter, Miss Churchill?"

"Something frightened me in the bushes."

He looked scrutinizingly in every direction.

"I see nothing—was it a wolf?"

"No—let's go on."

"Your heart is beating as though it would break its prison—you are shaking like an ague. Was it a bear?"

"No, no—*do* go on."

"*What* was it then?"

"Nothing, nothing—please go on."

"And yet you can scarcely keep your seat. Are you nervous, Miss Churchill?"

"Yes, very."

"I should think so; you should have medical advice," and touching his horse, they galloped forward.

They soon entered an open forest glade in which stood the church, a red brick building, having the form of a cross. Many broken tombstones were all around it, and scattering trees to which were tied numerous horses, and nearly filling up the glade were hundreds of vehicles of every description, from the ox-cart to the splendid coach and pair. Alighting near a horse-block, he fastened his horse, and lifting her from the pillion, led her into the church, which was already crowded, and up the long middle aisle to the pew of Emily, which was the top pew on the right hand facing the pulpit; he opened the door, saw her seated, and passed on to his reading-desk. Emily observed the pale face and trembling frame of her friend, but had no opportunity of inquiring the cause, which she naturally associated with her delay in overtaking her. Nor was this opportunity afforded after church, when the congregation all crowded around to speak to their new minister. Mr. Gardiner Green, a wealthy planter, the nearest neighbor of Emily, performed the part of master of ceremonies. It is true that all had seen Mr. Withers at Mr. May's funeral, but upon such an occasion as that, of course there could be but few introductions. It was an hour before the congregation were all in their saddles or their vehicles, and ready to disperse.

When our little party were mounted and had entered the forest, the pastor said,

"Your young friend, Miss Churchill, is a celebrated horsewoman, is she not, Mrs. May?"

"*Very*. Sophie is the best rider of all the ladies of this county," said Emily, unsuspiciously, "but what detained you so long?"

"While I was hunting for Miss Churchill's gloves, her horse suddenly started and ran off with her; dashed down the bank and into the river. She kept her seat like a heroine, and so was saved."

Emily evinced less surprise than might have been expected, merely remarking,

"I have known Sophie Churchill to ford that river on horseback when a mere child."

"Yet Miss Churchill seems very timid too."

"She is. Her good horsemanship is merely habit—she has been accustomed to ride from infancy; but to-day Sophie certainly is nervous—what is the matter with you, Sophie, my love?"

Sophie spoke of her fright in the forest, yet persisted in refusing to explain it. They reached home. Dinner was ready, the ladies laid off their bonnets, and all sat down to the table. Immediately after dinner the minister arose and retired to his chamber, and Sophie drew a long free breath, as though a stricture were removed from her chest.

"Come into our bed-room, and let's put on our loose wrappers and lie down, Sophie; it is really fatiguing these long rides to church and back."

And she arose, and Sophie followed her. Emily assisted her off with her dress, and taking a bottle of cologne, washed her face and head until she looked better; and then, as they rested on the bed, she said,—

"Now, Sophie, tell me about this forest fright, for there is more in it than you would confess to any one but me."

"Perhaps you will think it imagination, or nothing, yet, as we entered the deep dell, just a quarter of a mile behind the church, I happened to turn my head, and low, crouched down to the ground, I saw—"

"What?"

"The wannest, most spectral face that could be conceived, with wild eyes and streaming hair."

"A runaway mulatto!"

"I tell you *no!* The face was whiter than snow—the eyes blue, and blazing in their steady gaze upon me; the hair golden, streaked with silver. The skeleton hand was like a bird's claw with emaciation, and the finger pointed to the minister."

Emily listened with an incredulous smile, then she said—

"A figure conjured up by imagination, Sophie—a mere creature of your disordered nerves. You should read Sir Walter Scott's letters on Demonology, and then you would understand. But, dear, how do you and the minister get on? Do you know I think you are a favorite with him."

"Oh! God forbid!" said Sophie, clasping her hands.

"Why, my dear, what is the matter?"

"*Oh!* I have such an antipathy to him—such a sickening, deadly antipathy to him; when his eyes meet mine, or his hand falls upon mine,

Digitized by Google

a cold chill runs all through me, and I grow blind and faint."

"Well, my love, fortunately you are not obliged to like him. Yet he will be very popular, Sophie. Did you observe the even unusual respect paid him by his congregation to-day? His sermon made a marked impression. All the widows and girls will be setting their caps for him, but you, I think, will win the prize."

"Emily, I am going home to-morrow."

"*No*, my love, no; why, what put that into your head?"

"I do not like to stay here; I do not like Mr. Withers, and I do not like the tone of your conversation so soon after your husband's death."

The tears overflowed Emily's eyes.

"I am wrong—I am wrong, to forget for a moment the loss of so kind a friend; and yet, Sophie, death never did make me gloomy. Sickness does, suffering does, but I quite as often envy as regret the departed. Think, Sophie, he has rejoined in heaven the wife of his youth and middle life, 'the Michal of his bloom,' whom he loved as he never could love *me*, 'the Abishag of his age.' She was his companion for time and for eternity; I, only a fellow-passenger for a short stage—the *end* of his journey, the *beginning* of mine."

Here a summons to tea broke up their conference. They dressed and went out; the minister was there before them. They sat down to tea.

The next morning Sophie Churchill made an effort to return home, but she was overruled. It was Saturday, Emily said, and she must stay to attend church the next day, Easter Sunday. She complied, and attended church with the family, without meeting with another adventure of any sort. On Easter Monday Sophie mounted on Emily's horse, and carrying little Hagar on her lap, set out for her home at Heath Hall, attended by Master Gusty Wilde May as escort, who fancied his manhood greatly accelerated by the honor of his office.

I told you that the house at the Heath was large and square. It faced the bay, and a wide hall ran from the central front entrance through to the back—from the middle of this hall, and facing the entrance, arose the wide stair-case, whose balustrades turned off in a scroll on each side of the bottom steps. Under these stairs was a large closet where household utensils were kept. On each side of this wide hall were opposite doors—the left hand door letting into the parlor, the right hand door into the ruinous drawing-room. The dim old parlor, with the sleeping-room above it, and the kitchen near it, was the only habitable part of the house, and even these rooms leaked in rainy weather. One evening, about a week from the day of her arrival at home, Sophie Churchill sat alone before the smouldering fire in the wide arched fire-place; a lamp burned on the little old spider-legged workstand; the moonlight streamed through the branches of the old poplar trees that swayed against the four gothic-arched and curtainless front windows. The room was nearly bare of furniture; no carpet was on the floor; and the once bright-colored landscape paper on the walls illustrating Fox's Christian Martyrs was torn and faded. It was a wierd scene enough. The figures of the Martyrs were large as life. Upon the wall opposite the fire-place, and beside the door leading into the hall, was the representation of a Christian suffering the baptism of fire; and as the ray of the lamp flickered upon it, the form of the martyr seemed to writhe and quiver—seemed to dip and rise from the flames, and the features of his tormentors to grin and leer. Sophie sat there knitting, and her large brown eyes were somewhat larger, with a vague terror that had fallen upon her spirits as soon as she was left alone. And well might she feel this; except the infant and the beldam, there was not a soul within half a mile of her, and the forest behind was known to be the refuge of a runaway negro—a gigantic fellow, whose depredations in the neighborhood were violent and frequent.

At the time I write of, the most heinous crimes were sometimes perpetrated by fugitive slaves in their desperation; their motives—revenge, impending starvation, or a passionate desire for liberty. They are the banditti of the Southern States. The forests of Maryland and Virginia contain caves, once the resort of run-away negroes, from whence at night they issued and fell upon the unwary traveller or the unprotected house to levy their contributions.

"Jim Hice," the man whose depredations now spread terror through the neighborhood, was a fugitive not only from slavery, but from justice. Impelled by starvation, he had once, after watching a long time outside of the window to know that the coast was clear, entered the kitchen of an old friend and begged "a mouthful to save me from starving." This friend gave him a can of whiskey, which he swallowed at a draught, and which, from the emptiness of his stomach, immediately intoxicated him; and then offered him a hunk of corn pone and a herring, which he began to devour like a wild beast. But before he could finish it, the door opened and the overseer of the estate appeared. The negro recognised him—his eyes flew wildly around. He sprang to the window, but was seized by the hands of the overseer before he could pass through it. They struggled for life and death—but the struggle was unequal. Soon the gigantic negro had hugged his captor to his bosom with one strong arm, while with the other hand he drew from his pocket a butcher knife and plunged it to the handle into his chest—then dropping him, sprang over his body, cleared the door, and fled to the woods.

The officers of justice were soon in pursuit—a price was set upon his head—volunteering parties set out in search of him, and he was traced to the forest behind Heath Hall. There, in spite of the most vigorous hunt with horses and hounds in the deep dells and dense thickets of the forest, he remained concealed.

It was a week since they had lost trace of him there—and old Cumbo had just brought the news to Sophie that day—hence Sophie's dilating eyes and starting nerves at every sound. At last, though but eight o'clock, she could bear it no longer—so wrought up had her nerves become that as the lamp flickered against the walls, the old figures in the landscape paper, Fox's Martyrs, seemed to dance and jibber in their flames. The rattling branches against the windows seemed the breaking, crushing cross-

Digitized by Google

bar of the burglar, while the glancing of the moonbeams between them seemed like the gliding about of spirits from another world. Sophie arose with a cautious tread, as though stealing from enemies, and opened the door of the great hall from the centre of which the staircase ascended. She held her lamp in one hand, her knitting in the other, and her heart was beating and her eyes half starting as she opened the door and prepared to bound up the stairs to her own, and little Hagar's room. Somehow all her vague imaginary terrors gave way, while she held little Hagar in her arms, as though there was safety in the presence of infant innocence. She opened the door, and there before her, joining her, stood the gigantic negro, with wild, haggard face, and bloodshot eyes! With a piercing scream, Sophie dropped her candle, which was extinguished in the fall, and fled back into the parlor.

He followed her.

She had sunk, paralysed with extreme terror, into a chair.

The negro stood before her again, and extending one talon-like hand, exclaimed—

"I am not going to hurt you, Miss Sophie—give me some victuals—I am starving!"

But Sophie only gazed at him with a started and stony eye—her senses petrified.

"Give me some food, Miss Churchill, I die—"

Sophie was dying, or seemed to be—her head had fallen back against the chair—her chin had dropped, and her stony eyes, started from her chalky face, were riveted upon her fearful visitor.

His eyes were hollow and fiery, and his giant frame was trembling in every limb. He dropped on the floor before her, and said—

"Miss Sophie, Miss Sophie, look at me. I won't hurt you—how could I hurt you when I can scarcely stand! Give me some victuals—I have not tasted food for four days. Give me some, Miss Sophie!—Oh don't be scared at *me*—not at *me*—who used to ride you on my shoulder when you were a baby—how could *I* hurt you?"

Just then the door opened, and Sophie, with a scream of joy, bounded from her chair, sprang over the prostrate negro, and flew into the arms of old Cumbo and fainted.

The pastor was behind the old woman. The negro seeing her, started up, ran and shook the window sash—it resisted his efforts to raise or break; sprang to the opposite side, tried another window in vain—then attempted to dart past the minister who stood in the door. Mr. Withers extended his arm, intercepted and captured the fugitive. He struggled—Mr. Withers was cool, strong, and determined—held him fast by the wrists—trying to get them together that he might bind them. He stood firm, while the negro—his eyes glaring like flame in a dark night, his teeth set, his thick neck swollen, his starting muscles, like knotted cords in his sinewy arms, fell violently from side to side in his desperate efforts to escape.

He had been starving, and the factitious strength lent by despair soon failed—his struggles became fainter and fainter—and ceased as Mr. Withers bore him down to the floor, placed his knee upon his breast, crossed his wrists, and hallooed to the old woman to bring a cord to bind him.

Old Cumbo, in a distant part of the room, was bathing her young mistress's face with water—Sophia Churchill was recovering from her faint. The old woman hobbled up, shaking her hand in the face of the captive as she passed him, exclaiming, "You gallows face vilyun you!" went into the hall, opened a dark closet under the stairs, and drew out a clothes line, which she brought to Mr. Withers. He bound his prisoner securely, and then stood up from his labors to breathe; his eyes fell on the drooping form of Sophia Churchill, he walked up to her and stooping over her spake softly,

"You have been in some danger and very great alarm, Miss Churchill; I thank God who inspired my visit to you this evening. I just chanced to knock at your hall door, as your old servant, aroused by your screams, had come down to your assistance; she opened the door and admitted me."

Sophia was still trembling in every limb, and the tears were trickling down her cheeks.

"And now, Miss Churchill, I must leave you immediately to proceed to the village and procure an officer; the miscreant must be lodged in jail to-night. Don't feel any more alarm; he is perfectly secure, or if it would relieve you, we can lock him up; have you a room?"

"No," said Sophia, "don't lock him up."

"It would be altogether a work of supererogation, I think. Well, Miss Churchill, I will leave you now, and return within two hours."

So saying the minister took his hat and withdrew. Sophia remained leaning her cheek upon her hand. The old woman stood stooping over the negro with her hands resting on her knees, peering down in his face.

"Kik—kik—kik!" (laughing), "you ready trussed for hanging up now, aint you? kik—kik—kik—kik! how you feel when git rope roun' neck, hey? Mind, I gwine see you hang, hear?"

"Cumbo, come away," commanded Miss Churchill, as sternly as she knew how to speak.

The old woman did not move nor take off her eyes from her fallen foe, but answered, "Oh, he one gran' rascal, Missy, one gallows-face vilyun as ever lib—use to drive me 'bout 'mong corn hills, when he great man, when he Massa Churchill oberseer—*black* oberseer—*black* gemmun—*black* Massa! kik—kik—kik!" And the old woman snapped her fingers under the nose of the prisoner.

The harshness of black overseers, who are often selected for their greater vigilance and severity, and the hatred the negroes feel towards them, is notorious in the Southern States.

The old woman continued her abuse, the negro suffered it without reply. Sophia Churchill watched him

"Until the pity of her heart grew strong."

At last the old woman said,

"Now I gwine out, see ef dey comin' wid cons'ble," and left the room.

Sophia looked at the poor wretch tied like a beast for slaughter, and thought of the dreadful death hanging over him, until pity overcame terror and conquered reason. She arose, and drawing near him stealthily as one would approach a bound tiger, she said gently:

"Jim, I'm sorry for you."

"Oh! Miss Sophia," said he weeping.

"*Very* sorry for you. Oh! Jim, *why* did you

Digitized by Google

run away, and *why* did you break into houses and rob, and *why, why* did you stab the overseer?"

"*Is* he dead? tell me *that, is* he dead, Miss Sophia?"

"No, Jim, he is not dead, he has recovered, so you are free from blood-guiltiness."

"Thank God, then, I'm no murderer."

"But, poor wretch, your fate in this world will be the same as though you were. You made an assault upon the life of an overseer in his attempt to re-capture you; nc v just to *see* what you have brought yourself to."

The negro wept outright.

"But I did not come over here to reprove you, Jim. Jim, if I were to cut your bands and let you go, what would you do?" He half started up, gazed intently on her and said,

"I would go down on my knees and bless you; I'd learn to pray, so I could pray for you."

"I don't mean that; would you try to reform?"

"Miss Sophia, would you believe me if I were to promise?"

Sophia was silent.

"There, I knew you wouldn't, Miss Sophia, you couldn't if you were to try," and he sighed heavily.

"Jim, I will let you go. I don't know whether I am doing right or wrong, but I cannot bear the thought of your wretched condition, and the awful fate that too surely awaits you, if you are imprisoned to-night. Listen, Jim. I have a strong fishing-boat, moored at the beach, at the foot of the promontory; two oars and some fishing tackle are in it—in the little fishing-shed under the brow of the rock there is a sail. When I cut these cords, fly, take the boat, the oars, and the sail, put out into the bay, keep near the coast, and *up* the bay, until you reach the Susquehanna; go a few miles up that, and then land. You will be in Pennsylvania, and you will be safe. And oh, listen! Go to work—steal no more, for every future crime you commit will rest upon my head for permitting you to escape." Sophie was now trembling at the responsibility she was assuming. "Look you, Jim, resolve upon amendment, pray God to help, and *I*," said she sternly, "*I* shall pray too. I shall pray God to help you to reform, and I shall pray God to grant you a safe termination to your highly dangerous voyage, if you are *going* to reform; if not, if he sees your heart is hardened, I shall pray him in that case to let you drown or fall into the hands of your pursuers, that my mercy to you may not turn out cruelty to others."

She went into the kitchen, got a pone of cornbread and a knife, returned and cut his cords. He sprang upon his feet, and scarcely waiting to receive the pone she gave him, fled from the house.

Sophie sat down trembling in her seat. She had been afraid of him even while talking to him and setting him at liberty; now she drew a long breath, with an inexpressible feeling of relief. But soon came other thoughts; her doubtful act of mercy had been a matter of feeling entirely, and by no means of judgment, and she did not now feel altogether assured of its prosperity; besides she feared that she had made herself in some way amenable to the laws, by assisting a felon to escape. Sophie was really growing sick at heart; she resolved to avoid an explanation and seek her rest. She went to her chamber, undressed and retired to bed, where, with little Hagar clasped in her arms, she tried to forget in the presence of innocence the scene of horror she had lately witnessed. Presently she heard the officers enter the room below; exclamations of surprise and regret (oaths were spared in the pastor's presence), and then she heard old Cumbo hobbling up the stairs. She entered her room, exclaiming in tones of extreme indignation—

"Ha! hi! *What* do you think, Miss Soph, do you think that gallows-faced vilyun aint broke loose and *gone!*"

Sophie raised herself on her elbow and looked at the old woman without speaking.

"Yes, indeed! broke loose and *gone!* There's no tellin' what *he wouldn't* do, the ongrateful wretch, to break loose and go! after Massa Widders con'cendin' tu him too! Oh! he'd 'ny his Saviour—*he'd* do anything."

"Cumbo, will you be kind enough to go down to Mr. Withers, and tell him that I am sick—*very* sick—and ask him to excuse my absence!"

"An' nuff to make you! an' nuff to make you! I'm sick myself; I did hope to see that gran' rascal hang. I did *that*, and now jes see what a 'spointment."

And the old woman hobbled away, and soon she heard her visitors leave the house, speaking their regret and sympathy as they went. Old Cumbo came up, and spreading a pallet near her young mistress's bed, lay down to sleep, or rather to talk.

CHAPTER V.

THE PHILOSOPHER.

"Anxiety and Ennui are the Scylla and Charybdis of the voyage of Life."
RAMSAY ON HUMAN HAPPINESS.

THE next morning early Emily May was over at the hall. She rode her own saddle-horse and little Gusty rode another, behind which was fixed a pillion, upon which Sophie was to return to the Grove—at least, so said Mrs. May, for she persisted that Heath Hall was neither a safe nor a proper place of residence for Miss Churchill. But neither coaxing threats nor arguments would have prevailed with Sophie to leave the Heath—her antipathy to Emily's boarder was undiminished. Emily spent the day with her, and at nightfall left, disappointed.

That evening, after the beldam and the infant were asleep, Sophie as usual sat alone in her large old parlor. She felt a sense of security and peace, and plied her knitting-needles diligently—her thoughts occupied with no heavier matter than the heeling and toeing of little Hagar's red worsted stockings, or at most, the well-being of her cow and calf, or her vegetable garden, for already upon the maiden had descended matronly cares. She sat there knitting, and presently a rap—a calm, self-possessed rap was heard at the hall door; she glanced at the old clock in the corner, it was seven o'clock; she passed to the door and reached it

Digitized by Google

just as the rap was repeated; she opened it, and Mr. Withers, the minister, stood before her; his thin dark figure looming up in the moonshine.

"Good evening, Miss Churchill," said he, stepping in, taking her hand and pressing it gently. "You have quite recovered your fright, I trust?"

"Quite, sir," replied Sophie, laconically, as she reluctantly led the way into the room and set a chair for her minister on the opposite side of her work-stand. He dropped himself into it, and extending his long legs towards the little fire, he said,—

"You were not at church last Sabbath, Miss Sophie, and it was with a view of inquiring the reason of your absence that I came here—may I make that inquiry now?"

"Except while with Mrs. May I have not been to church for many months."

"May I inquire, as your pastor, why?"

"The distance is considerable; that, in Summer, would be no objection, but during the Winter and Spring the roads are nearly impassable to a foot passenger, and I have no conveyance."

"Ah!" said the minister, a gleam of pleasure lighting up his dark countenance, "then I am very happy in possessing the means of obviating that objection; having just purchased a gig, I shall be very happy in making a small circuit in my ride, for the purpose of taking you to church."

"You will be giving yourself too much trouble, sir," said Sophie.

"Not so, my dear; you must see that to *me* at least it will be a pleasure."

"You are very obliging, sir."

Sophie's eyes were fixed upon her knitting. She appeared to be counting the stitches. He found it very difficult to support a conversation with her, but he persevered, questioning her with a pastor's privilege with a young parishioner, upon the state of her affairs in general, her income, the number of slaves on hire, the resources of her farm, her fishing landing, her moor, her garden, and her dairy. She gave him laconic, but straightforward answers, and at the end of the colloquy he mused, and, half to himself, said, that the place had been very much abused, that with ease it might yet be reclaimed, and a handsome property made of it; and then, at the end of an hour, he arose and took leave.

Sophie rejoiced that his visit was at an end. Throughout his whole stay she had not once raised her eyes to his countenance.

Two evenings from that, at the same hour, and in the same place, Sophie sat alone, a rap was heard at the door, and again she arose, opened it, and admitted the minister; again he found a seat at the opposite side of her work-stand; and again he freely used his pastoral privilege of questioning her; but this time it was not upon external circumstances, but upon the operations of her mind and heart; and how adroitly he did it—*with his pastoral privilege*—and but for her antipathy, how easy had been his task, with one of Sophie's *naiveté*. Yes, she admitted, in reply to his searching questions, that even she, young as she was, sometimes felt life to wane and sink as though her very soul was dying in her bosom, that sometimes life appeared to have no object worth pursuing.

"You suffer from ennui then, Miss Churchill, perhaps you would not feel this so much in the company of your friend, Mrs. May, would you?"

"Yes, sir, I have felt dull even with Emily."

"Do you suffer from *ennui* when busied in your garden, your dairy, or at your needle-work?"

"Yes, sir, for it seems to me sometimes a sad waste of life to pass it *only* in feeding the stomach and clothing the back."

Sophie was certainly beginning to be more communicative; the pastor was drawing her out. He looked at her now with more interest than ever, as he said—

"And yet, Miss Churchill, there is your friend, Mrs. May, who finds her happiness in her daily life and household duties. How do you account for her habitual cheerfulness; or do you suppose that she is ever a victim to ennui?"

"*Never!* But then Emily May is a 'fine woman,' every one says so—'an excellent manager'—the best housekeeper in the county, and she is happy, busy and happy, because she deserves to be. I am, or if I could afford it, *should* be idle, for I am not as fond of household work as Emily is, and I am discontented, and as idleness and discontent are sin, and sin is misery, therefore I am sometimes miserable, it is quite plain."

"Why don't you overcome this sinful tendency then?"

"As yet I have not been able to do it, I resolve—"

"'And re-resolve,' and will be likely to 'die the same,' if you do not get to the root of your malady and understand it. Your explanation" (and the pastor smiled a slightly cynical smile) "is an orthodox piece of theology enough, as far as it goes. Idleness is certainly sinful and a fruitful cause of discontent, because it is opposed to the principles of our organization; there is no atom in the universe idle for a single instant, nor are we, even our bodies, *ever* idle, even when sleeping, for the heart, lungs, and brain continue to perform their functions, even when *dead;* for when the dust returns to dust, its particles, through a thousand ramifications, perform a thousand services in the universe. And the mind? Is the mind *ever* idle? Has the course of thought been once really arrested since it first began? it has flowed in countless millions of courses; it has been suddenly turned aside, but has it ever stopped? Your heart has beaten, your brain worked for twenty years, to what purpose? No, Miss Churchill, by *idleness* you mean misdirection of energies; and by *discontent* the pain that naturally follows therefrom. Listen to me, Miss Churchill."

Sophie was listening to him with interest—these thoughts, however old, were to the unopened mind of the young girl new and striking.

"Listen, I can explain your friend's happiness and your own misery, better and more satisfactorily than you have done—and by doing so, illustrate the lesson I wish to give you; and further and more completely to illustrate my theory, I must bring in another acquaintance of ours, Mrs. Gardiner Green; what is her character, Sophie?"

"An elegant woman, all the neighbors say, but always in a bustle, always overheated about something, always anxious."

Digitized by Google

"I thought so! she will do for an illustration of my first class *à merveille*.

"Listen then, Miss Churchill—the secret of happiness is *this:* the striking of a just balance between the desires and the faculties; if the desires are greater than the faculties, they will goad you on to efforts beyond your strength, and anxiety will destroy happiness, as in the case of Mrs. Gardiner Green, whose desires Heaven knows are low enough—being only to shine as the bright particular star of a country neighborhood—to have the best house, the best equipage, to wear the best dresses, and give the best dinners; grovelling as these wishes are, they yet exceed her faculties for accomplishing them—hence her eternal fret. I can further illustrate this class of unfortunates by a notorious name, Aaron Burr; brilliant as were his faculties his desires yet transcended them—he wished to rule alike despotically over the hearts and minds of men and women, and over the nations of the earth. In both these cases that I have cited, one from the highest, the other from the lowest grade of mind, the evil was the same—the balance between the faculties and the desires was not struck. Well, Miss Churchill, you are musing—upon what?"

"I was thinking, had Aaron Burr had the power of accomplishing his ambitious desires, or had Mrs. Gardiner Green the ability to carry out her vain ones, would either be any happier?"

"That involves another question of moral philosophy to which we have not arrived, and which we will not discuss just now. We are speaking of present and positive causes of unhappiness, and not of future contingencies, Sophie—I beg your pardon, Miss Churchill."

"Call me Sophie, I am more accustomed to that name," said she, rather timidly. Truly Miss Churchill was "coming round," and the minister felt it, for he replied gently,

"And I am more accustomed to *hear* you called Sophie—and," added he softly, "to *think* of you as Sophie."

She avoided meeting his eyes, which she felt fixed upon her, and a strange pain, dissipating all the intellectual pleasures she was beginning to receive from his society, crept into her heart—she blamed herself for having spoken in the manner she did.

He resumed,

"You, Sophie, belong to the second class of my unfortunates, the class whose *faculties* transcend their desires, whose peculiar torment is *ennui*. You, Sophie, have some noble faculty or faculties unemployed, and they are corroding in your bosom, and you call your suffering discontent. Your remedy is to discover these latent faculties (for very often these are as unknown or unsuspected by their possessor, as is some obscure physical disease), and develope and cultivate them—it is their suppressed life that is torturing you now—bring them out, use them, give them a field and you will be happy."

"But how?" said Sophie, looking up again.

"I will teach you by-and-bye. Pass we now to the third class, or those whose faculties and desires are fairly balanced, who suffer neither from ennui on the one side nor anxiety on the other. Your friend, Mrs. May, is a perfect example of this happy organization; her whole soul is in her house and family; she has no wish beyond the well ordering of her dwelling, the propriety of her dress, her table, her manners and conversation, and the education of her son, and her faculties are fully equal to, and not greater than her wishes; thus she is always calmly busy and serenely happy."

He now arose to take leave, and Sophie took the lamp to light him to the door. When they got there he held out his hand to bid her good night; he caught her hand, held it a moment while his glance sought her eyes, met them, and he murmured in a low earnest voice, "Sophie."

She withdrew her hand, dropped her eyes, and a chill crept over her frame. He whispered "good-night," set his hat upon his head, and walked off. His tall thin figure was soon seen stalking up and down the undulating hills that descended to the river.

Two or three days passed and Miss Churchill saw no more of the minister. "I wonder if he will come to-night," had been the secret thought of Sophie as evening approached each day; and half with dread, half with hope, she listened for his knock. His last visit had been on Wednesday. Saturday evening came. Sophie had completed her week's work, and was sitting at the window with her hands folded on her lap, and looking out into the moonlit scene. The moon was now full, and the broad river and the boundless bay were reflected in its light and seen between the clumps of intervening trees. At last upon the path issuing from the clump of trees on the left, was seen the tall figure of the minister. Sophie withdrew from the window, and soon after Mr. Withers was admitted by old Cumbo, who had not yet retired to bed.

"Well, Miss Churchill," said he, advancing to her side, "have you succeeded in discovering those faculties, whose corrosion in idleness is giving you so much distress?"

"I cannot flatter myself, sir, with the idea of possessing any faculties above the simple discharge of plain duties."

"Then you are quite happy in knitting, sewing, and watching old Cumbo milk the cows and weed the garden; and you never wish these occupations varied except by rest and recreation?"

Sophie was silent. He had now taken a seat by her side on the settle under the window. Sophie's eyes were riveted abstractedly on the opposite wall, papered with the martyrdom of St. Petronella and the four noble Roman ladies who suffered with her; the scene represented the martyrdom at the moment when life was offered the young saint as she stood upon the scaffold, on condition of her recantation. She stood in the centre of the scaffold arrayed in a scant white tunic, her white and slender limbs exposed, her hands clasped upon her bosom, and her fine blue eyes raised to heaven, her golden locks rolling to her waist; behind her, leaning on his axe, whose end rested on the block, stood the executioner; on her left hand stood the group of imperial officers, with their offer of mercy; on her right knelt her aged father with his grey locks streaming on the wind, his face upturned to hers in the anguish of supplication, holding towards her a babe of a few days old—*her* babe, of which she had been delivered in prison—appealing to her by the venerableness of his own grey hairs, the innocence of its infancy, and the helplessness of both, to avoid death, to recant her faith, and to live for

Digitized by Google

them; but the eyes of the saint never fell from their high glance, the look alike above the terror, the bribe, and the love below her.

"Well, Miss Churchill, when you have contemplated that saint, which the painter has martyred worse than the Pagans, to your heart's content, you will give me an answer, perhaps, or is it so familiar that you never see it?"

"It is very familiar, sir, but it never wearies me; and now that you remind me of it, I sometimes, when I have nothing to do in the house, and when the weather is too inclement for me to go out, reproduce these scenes with a pencil and paper, and sometimes," said she, blushing deeply, "illustrate them with pen and ink."

"You draw, and write poetry; will you permit me to see some of your productions?"

"I try, but fail in both, sir; and if you will pardon me, I would prefer not to expose my folly further."

The pastor urged his point in vain, Sophie gently but firmly resisted.

But at this moment old Cumbo, who had hobbled out of the room, hobbled back, and before Sophie suspected her purpose, thrust into the pastor's hands a dilapidated old portfolio, grumbling out,

"I telled her so—wouldn't b'lieve ole nigger, how de church would be down on top ob her for make de image ob ebery ting in heaben above, in de earf beneaf, an' de waters under de earf. I telled her how 'twould be."

The minister examined the contents of the portfolio with a critic's eye; it was filled with very mediocre drawings, and very common-place versicles; in vain did the pastor look for one single stray gleam of genius; no more flashes of the fire divine were to be seen in her work than in her own soft brown eyes. The minister returned the papers to the portfolio, and handed it back to the old negress, who stood leaning over her stick in chuckling expectation of hearing her young mistress soundly lectured upon breaking the first commandment.

"This is idleness, this is play, this is not your vocation, Miss Churchill," and looking upon Sophie's round face, large soft eyes, and pouting lips, he said,

"I think after all, those strong faculties that want expression reside in your *heart*, not in your *head*, Miss Churchill." Then, as though he had regretted his speech, he was suddenly silent.

After a while he arose to take leave, saying as he left the house,

"I will call at nine to-morrow, to take you to church, Sophie."

The next morning he called in his vehicle. He found Sophie seated at the window with little Hagar on her lap. She was teaching her to read, and her whole countenance was irradiated with the love of her work. The child's little wild dark face was sparkling, too; she had succeeded in arousing and riveting her mind. As the eyes of the minister fell through the open window upon this scene he made two silent comments: "Her vocation is that of a teacher," and "That child has far more genius than her instructress;" and then he passed by the window into the house.

"Good morning, Miss Churchill. Come, we are waiting for you. Mrs. Gardiner Green has been kind enough to ride over with me."

Sophie gave little Hagar into the charge of old Cumbo, and went away to put on her bonnet. She was surprised that Mrs. Gardiner Green, who had scarcely ever condescended to notice her, should have been so kind upon this occasion; had Sophie Churchill known a little more of the world she would have seen nothing strange in this change. Even when seated by her side the affability of the lady became almost oppressive.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT.

"A stalwart, active, soldier-looking stripling,
Handsome as Hercules ere his first labor,
With a brow of thought beyond his years,
When in repose, till his eye kindles up
In answering yours."—WERNER.

"Behind a darker hour ascends."—MARMION.

THE minister had discovered Sophie Churchill's vocation by the subtle sympathy that existed between the instructress and the pupil, in the little scene he had witnessed. He was not backward in improving his discovery.

"We are very much in need of a parish-school, Miss Churchill," said he one evening as he sat with her. "I do not mean by that a free-school, but a school for the instruction of the younger children connected with the congregation. I have conversed with several of my parishioners, and they all favor the plan of establishing one. The circumstances of the surrounding neighborhood point to Heath Hall as its locality, and to the young lady of Heath Hall as its mistress. This has also been named and approved, and I come on the part of the vestry, who will resolve themselves into a board of school trustees, to lay the subject before you for consideration. What do you think of it, Miss Churchill?"

"Oh, if I were only fit for it!"

"You are the most proper person for it that I know. The faculty of teaching is a natural gift, like painting or poetry, and it is *your* gift; you can infuse into the mind of a tolerably intelligent child all your own knowledge, and not only so, but if you possess the faculty in its perfection, as I think you do, you can arouse the mind of a dull child, and inspire that of a darkened one with intelligence."

"But I am really *so* ignorant."

"That is a matter of secondary importance—knowledge can be acquired. You possess the first requisite, that which never *can* be acquired, the natural adaptation for the profession. Why, Sophie, I have known men of the finest talents and the highest attainments in science and literature, fine classical and mathematical scholars, who could not for the soul of them convey into a child's mind the reason why you sometimes borrow ten and carry one in the rule of subtraction; and I have known such men at the head of large academies, or filling professors' chairs in colleges, advanced to their post of responsibility upon account of their vast acquirements in knowledge and their unimpeachable morality. Now this would seem to be all that is required,

Digitized by Google

yet people never take into account the attractions a profession should have for its votary. So these men of unimpeachable morality and unexcelled intelligence pass their time and spend their energies in beating the air, while their pupils are unimproved, except, perhaps, by the instruction of others."

"That is strange," said Sophie.

"You think it is. So a musical genius of acute ear wonders, until he understands how another of no ear can sing out of tune."

"I can certainly teach easily and quickly everything that I know thoroughly, and some things that I do not know thoroughly, for sometimes when trying to explain to little Hagar a subject whose boundaries are indistinct to me, a gleam of light breaks into my mind, and all is clear to my vision—clear to its fullest extent, and my little pupil, at the end of her lesson, knows more than her teacher did at its commencement."

"Yes, and yet you, Sophie, stand merely upon the threshold of the temple of knowledge, and can do what some of the high priests of the altar would fail in attempting. Thus a teacher's efficiency should be judged not by his own reputation for natural intelligence or acquired knowledge, but by his ability to convey the same to his pupils, to be tested by the actual progress of his pupils. If people would only follow the natural bent of their faculties, how much swindling, cheating, idleness, humbuggery, hypocrisy, *misery* would be saved; had *I* done so how much—"

He stopped and bit his lip.

"Your pupils at first will be the youngest children of the congregation who are old enough to attend school. While instructing them you will be cultivating your own mind and adding to your stores of information; in this latter part of the plan I shall assist you, Miss Churchill. It will give me pleasure to be your teacher, for though I have no particular vocation for the profession, yet as it is so much easier to teach a grown person than a child, for in the former case the pupil meets one more than half-way, and in the latter case one has to go *all* the way and charm the pupil *out and on*, I shall have no great trouble with you. And by next year you will be able to take a more advanced class of young ladies."

Then with Sophie he explored the ruinous apartments on the other side of the hall, selected the old disused drawing-room as the future school-room, and saying that he would send carpenters and plasterers over in the morning, he withdrew.

The next morning a carpenter, a plasterer, and a glazier came, and they came every day for a fortnight, and at the end of that time the boarded up, close, dark old drawing-room looked large, lightsome, and clean. In another week the school furniture arrived—a nice little mahogany desk for the teacher, and a dozen stained and varnished pine forms for the pupils.

And now behold Sophie Churchill in her favorite sober brown silk dress, with her smoothly-braided brown hair, seated at her desk presiding over her school, her large soft brown eyes floating serenely over the scene. Now no more *ennui*, now quickly fled the day, now pleasantly passed the week—the month. Is it a wonder that Sophie cherished in her heart a warm sentiment of gratitude towards the man who had wrought this favorable change in her life? The circle of her existence was vastly enlarged. Every Friday evening a horse and side-saddle would be sent by some one of her patrons to convey her to their house, where she was ever warmly welcomed, a loved and honored guest, to remain until Monday morning recalled her to her school duties. Once or twice during the week Emily May would accompany Gusty to school, and remain all day assisting Sophie at her labor. Nearly every evening now the pastor came, and gave her lessons in Greek and mathematics. Sophie felt so little "vocation" for these severe studies that nothing but the implacable will of her minister could have kept her to it. Worse than anything in her experience she dreaded his frown and his sure and stern rebuke when she had not accomplished her task—worse than anything except the steady searching gaze of his coldly brilliant green-grey eyes. *This* froze the blood in her heart. And yet she felt grateful towards him; she blamed herself for her antipathy—her reason assured her that the *fault* was not in *him*, but the *folly* in *herself*. Her reason approved the pastor, the philosopher, the teacher—her instincts shrank from the man. With all this there was sometimes something strangely fascinating for her, even in his coldness, hardness, and harshness—a feeling, that if some element, she knew not what, were absent from his character, she might then meet his friendship—that something in utter discord with her own soul—that something that, speaking through his green-grey eyes, chilled and repelled her. Affairs were in this state when one Friday morning, early in June, Master Gusty May, on entering the school-room, marched up to the teacher's desk with an air of importance, and handed her a note. It was from Mrs. May, and ran thus:—

"Dearest Sophie, do return with Gusty this evening. I have sent a pillion, and you can ride behind him. There are to be grand doings at Grove Cottage this evening. Kitty is beating eggs; and I am stoning raisins—all this in honor of the expected arrival of Lieutenant Augustus H. Wilde, United States Navy. My dear brother Gusty, his ship has arrived at the Navy Yard at Norfolk—he has received his promotion, and writes that he will be with me this evening. Wear your *new* brown silk dress, Sophie, for I want you to make a conquest of Master Gusty, Senior, so that we can keep him here while he is on shore. And I want *him* to cut the minister out, *too*, although the whole country says it will be such a 'marvellous proper' match—that is, between you and the minister. Come. EMILY."

There was another horse and side-saddle brought by another pupil to carry Sophie home with him that evening, but when school was dismissed, Master Gusty (junior, as we must call him now) marched up to the bringer of the rival nag, and told the "fellow" that Miss Churchill was going home with *him*, and that he had better carry his "beast" back again.

During their ride to the Grove, Gusty informed Miss Churchill that he was named after his uncle, Augustus Wilde, that the latter was just made a lieutenant, and that he was going to try to procure a midshipman's warrant for *him* when he was a little bigger. They arrived at the Grove at sunset. Lieutenant Wilde was already there, and came out gallantly to lift Sophie from her horse—she had never seen him before, and as he came from the cottage door down the

Digitized by Google

long grape-vine covered walk to the gate where her horse stood, she thought he was strikingly like his sister, the same silky black hair, the same dark-grey eyes—he approached, addressed her freely and cheerfully as his sister's familiar friend, and in lifting her off the pillion their eyes met—their *eyes* met, their *souls* met. The soul more or less plainly speaks through the eyes, and I believe that ever the truest, purest, strongest, and most lasting love begins with the first meeting of the eyes, in a sort of mutual recognition. Involuntarily his voice softened to its lowest, sweetest tones in addressing her, and tenderly, most tenderly he arranged her riding habit as he stood her on the ground, and then drawing her arm through his own, he gently led her up the grape walk to the house. Emily received her at the door with a hearty kiss, and telling her that she looked unusually charming, led her into the house. The pastor was within, of course. Emily's parlor glittered with its clean, sober, drab-colored glory. The evening passed delightfully, between Emily's music, Sophie's songs, and the young lieutenant's sea-stories, anecdotes, and adventures. The pastor alone was silent and moody. Never had Sophie Churchill passed so delightful an evening. With strangers generally, Sophie was as shy as the wild fawn of her native woods, and her large eyes would startle and dilate if she was addressed by any one, yet now those wild shy eyes were ever roving after another pair. As yet she was utterly unconscious of this truantism. At last they met that other pair, and she—*blushed, and looked down? No!* That belongs to a more sophisticated, a more conventional being than our wild fawn of the Heath. No—a glad, innocent, unconscious smile broke over her face. There was one present who watched her with a dark and lowering brow. Happily Sophie did not perceive the evil eye glowering under it. The evening closed. She retired to rest with an elevated and happy heart. She and Emily slept together in the same old room—the minister occupied his own chamber alone, for Emily did not like to thrust her brother in upon him. So after everybody was gone to rest, Emily prepared a sofa bed in the parlor for her brother.

"Emily! Emily! she is charming, charming!" said the young man, as his sister stooped to receive his good-night kiss.

"That she is, Gusty! Charming! and I am glad you find her so. Good-night."

"He loves you, darling—he loves you *dearly, sweet* darling," said Emily, hugging her friend to her bosom, "and I am so glad."

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG LOVE.

"So gaze met gaze,
And heart saw heart, translucid through the rays,
One same, harmonious, universal law,
Atom to atom, star to star can draw,
And heart to heart! Swift darts, as from the sun,
The strong attraction, and the charm is done."
—THE NEW TIMON.

It was such a beautiful morning, such a holiday seeming morning—the green foliage all sparkling with dew in the rays of the early sun, the air vocal, noisy with all sorts of merry sounds, cheerful household sounds, gay woodland music, the crowing of roosters, the cackling of hens, and above all, the merry, merry, merry bursts of melody from the birds. Augustus Wilde and Sophie Churchill sat in the vine-clad porch of Grove Cottage. (Emily was in the dining-room washing up her breakfast things, and the minister was writing his sermon in his room.)

"Do you know, Miss Churchill, that I am perpetually in danger of offending against the rules of etiquette, and calling you Sophie, as my sister calls you. Whenever I turn to address you, 'Sophie' springs to my lips. I warn you of it that you may not be offended when it comes—why, 'Sophie'—it just suits you—such a little shy fawn as you are—in every soft wave of your brown hair, in every floating beam of your tender eyes, in every fold of your sober dress 'Sophie' is revealed. I must call you Sophie."

They were sitting on the bench with their backs against the open window of Emily's bedroom (the little chamber on the left front, that I have described). He now felt his ears grasped from behind and his head well shaken. Sophie raised her eyes and saw the white dress, black curls, and merry face of his sister stooping from the window over him.

"Sophie, is it? Impudence! Well, Sophie, let him call you what he will—but don't you call him Augustus—there is nothing august about him, call him 'Gusty,' or 'Gusty Wilde,' for look you!" said she, pulling back his head, and kissing his brow, "there is so much latent strength and fire in this young man's veins that it is extremely apt to break out in storms—just watch him in controversy with Mr. Withers—the sudden anger will dart from his eyes like a spring lancet from its sheath!" She shook him again, and let him go.

"Oh! the atrocious medical simile!—like 'lightning from a mountain cloud,' you meant."

"Like a pea from a pop-gun, more likely. Now, Miss Churchill, he said your air and manner *revealed* 'Sophie'—very well—every glance, and start, and spring, every interjection and exclamation in his looks, gestures, and conversation *exposes* 'Gusty Wilde.'"

"*Now*, Miss Churchill, do you believe that?" inquired he, with mock seriousness.

"No, I am sure—" began Sophie.

"You are sure of nothing—he is on his good behavior now; wait and see. But that is not what I broke in upon you for, Mr. Wilde—I have come to invite you and Miss Churchill to ride with me this morning. We will borrow the parson's gig, and come, I will be good. You shall drive Sophie, and I will ride Fire-Fly, my pony. Come, run, Sophie, smoothe your hair, it is a little blown about by the breeze, and put on your bonnet. And *you*, Master Lieutenant, be so kind as to don your undress uniform at least—what is the good of having a brother in the Navy, if he dress like an undertaker at a funeral? Come! I want to show you off; I want to get half the girls in the neighborhood in love with you. Dear me! Am I not rich just now? Two beaux—the best of beaux for a country neighborhood—a preacher and an officer. Mercy! I shouldn't wonder if my

Digitized by Google

house became the resort of all the merry maidens and manœuvring mammas in —— county."

They made many calls that day before returning to a late dinner. The last house they called at was Mrs. Gardiner Green's, where they were received and entertained by that lady and her pretty daughter Rose.

The next day was Sunday, and they all went to church. Lieutenant Wilde sat between his sister and Miss Churchill in the front pew; there was an expression of serious joy upon the faces of the youth and maiden never seen there before—the minister, perhaps, never was less happy in his written sermon or its delivery, than upon this occasion. He had brought Sophie to church in his gig; at the close of the service he took her home to the Grove.

The afternoon and evening passed pleasantly. Early the next morning Sophie returned to Heath Hall, to re-commence her school duties. That day passed as usual; in the evening after tea, Sophie sat by the open window; it was a beautiful starlight night, and she delayed ordering lights, preferring to enjoy the cool night air, and listen to the pleasant night sounds by the open window. Presently a tall dark figure passed before the window, and in another moment the minister had entered and was by her side.

"Good evening, Miss Churchill."

"Good evening, Mr. Withers."

He took a seat by her side, and sat with his head bowed upon his hands that rested upon the top of a stick held between his knees; he was silent a long time; at last Sophie arose to order lights.

"Where are you going, Miss Churchill?"

"To have candles brought."

"Sit still, Miss Churchill."

Sophie resumed her seat.

"You have had a very pleasant visit to the Grove, Miss Churchill?"

"Very, sir."

"Humph! you were very much pleased with Mr. Wilde?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! that is very candid. But do you think, Miss Churchill, that I can altogether approve of the marked preference shown by a young lady in your circumstances for a young gentleman?"

Sophie looked bewildered, dismayed. The poor girl, naturally timid, had been made quite cowardly by the misconceptions, misconstructions, and misrepresentations of others; she grew pale, and replied with a faltering voice—

"I—I did not know—I knew—I know that my profession would seem to require more steadiness, gravity, and circumspection than I possess—but I was unconscious of any—"

Her voice faltered, broke down, and she stopped short, and burst into tears. He answered sternly—

"You know very well, Miss Churchill, that it is not your 'profession' I speak of. What can *that* be thought to have to do with your preferences? No, Miss Churchill, you know very well that I allude to the relations subsisting between us."

"The relations subsisting between us?" faltered Sophie.

"You certainly cannot successfully affect ignorance of a fact with which the whole county is acquainted, though it may *now* seem convenient for you to attempt it." He paused. "Well, Miss Churchill?"

"I do not understand you at all, sir."

"Then all the county understands and have understood for two months past, that we are to be married soon, Miss Churchill."

"Oh, my God, no! You never dreamed—*I* never dreamed of that! Oh, no! I had rather *die!* Oh! God knows I had!" exclaimed Sophie, wildly, clasping her hands and rising.

He caught her hand, and pressed her trembling into her seat again.

"Your aversion to me is certainly flattering—*very* flattering, Miss Churchill—but it is rather late *now* to express it. You have received my visits nightly for three months past—and now, to-night, for the first time, you express a strong and utter aversion to me."

"Oh, because *I couldn't help it!* How could I help your coming here—how can I help this aversion I feel—pardon me if I have expressed it strongly. I have a high respect for you, and I ought to feel honored by your preference—any woman in the parish would. You are too good—too wise for me, believe me you are! I am a child—a fool! Oh! don't think of it! *pray* don't think of it! Consider how many ladies—ladies of family and fortune—would be proud to wed the minister; who would throw himself away upon a poor, lone girl, without connexions, and without influence!"

Sophie had risen in her earnestness, and stood before him with her clasped hands.

He closed his eyes and smiled; he stretched forth his hand, and taking hers, drew her again to her seat, and passed his arm around her waist and whispered—

"My little Sophie, my little fawn, you shall be Mrs. Withers in three weeks, just as sure as you live!"

She shrank from the clasp of his arm, as though it had been the clammy coil of a serpent.

"I will not! cannot! durst not! Mr. Withers, why don't you marry Rose Green? She would have you; or Mrs. Somerville, or Mrs. Slye, or Mrs. Joshua Eversham, or Miss Polly Mortimer—any of them would have, would be proud to marry the minister of the parish."

"I know that, Miss Churchill!"

"And any of these ladies would make you a good wife."

"I do not doubt it, Miss Churchill."

"Then why don't you marry one of them?"

"Because they are each ready to fall into my arms."

Sophie was wounded and became silent—she attempted to withdraw herself from the embrace of his arm, but every attempt was punished by a tighter fold.

"Miss Churchill, do you know that there is an instinct in human nature—to speak more correctly, in *man's* nature, or in speaking *most* correctly, perhaps I should say in *my own* nature—to pursue that which *flies?* Why, Sophie, when I was a lad, I always preferred to play with kittens that were scarey and spiteful, that would kick, scratch, and bite, that would resist to the death rather than with one that would cosily and quietly nestle down in my lap—the latter I should have shaken off."

"But how," said Sophie, "if the poor kitten

Digitized by Google

neither resisted nor caressed you—shrank and shivered and died in your hands?"

"I should not give the weak thing a chance, Sophie; when the shrinking and shivering commenced, I should throw it heavily upon the ground, and thereby kill it."

Sophie shuddered.

Both were silent for some time; then he spoke—

"What day, Miss Churchill, between this and the first of next month will it please you to bestow upon me the honor of your hand?"

"No day! no day! Don't look at me so, Mr. Withers, pray don't; it makes me ill—*pray don't*—I am a mere girl, a mere child; it frightens me, this idea of marrying you—indeed, believe me, it does!"

"Come! Miss Churchill, come! This will not do—this fickleness and unfaithfulness on your part will not answer; I cannot permit it. I thought the footing we stood upon in relation to each other well understood; you certainly could *not* have misinterpreted the meaning of my visits here; no one else has misconceived them. Mrs. Gardiner Green inquired of me today when our marriage was to come off. I told her that it would take place some time this month, that I would apprise her of the exact day to-morrow. It is for the purpose of ascertaining your day that I have called this evening. Come, Sophie, satisfy me upon this point."

"I cannot! I cannot! God *knows* I cannot! Oh! *Why* do you persist in this? Why! why love a girl who is in no respect, of age, mind, education, or wealth, your equal?"

"Fiddlestick! have I said I loved you? No, Sophie, thank God I have never yet been, never, I trust, shall be, under the influence of that most weak and puerile passion."

"Then, in the name of reason and of mercy, why seek to marry a girl whom you do not love, and who hates—no, does not *hate*, but who fears and recoils from you?"

"Precisely because she *does* fear and recoil from me!"

"I will not marry you, then! I will not marry you then! please God to give me strength. Surely I am a free girl; no one has a right, or will attempt, or could succeed in forcing my inclinations. Come, I will be firm, and nothing can compel me!"

"But destiny. You are in a net of circumstances from whence there is no escape, Sophie Churchill. Do not struggle, you will lacerate your limbs and waste your strength only to entangle yourself the more."

Again silence ensued. Sophie continued from time to time to try to extricate herself from his grasp, each attempt but serving to rivet his arm about her waist—at last he said—

"The embrace of my arm is an emblem of the surrounding of your fate; you can as easily escape the one as the other."

Sophie burst into tears, and wept long and freely. He did not attempt to soothe or even to speak to her. At last her fit of grief and terror exhausted itself, and she became calm. Then she said—

"Oh, I might have guessed all this sorrow from the first time I ever met your eye!"

"Flattering again!"

The clock struck. Sophie struggled.

"Mr. Withers, it is ten o'clock."

"Well, Miss Churchill, I only wait my answer to return home."

"I have given you the only one I can give—take it again. I cannot give myself to you."

"Then I can take you, that's all, Sophie. Mrs. Gardiner Green will call upon you to-morrow," and so saying, he arose and took his leave.

When left alone Sophie paced uneasily up and down the floor, saying, as she clasped her temples—

"Am I mad or going mad? am I dreaming? Under a spell? Oh, *what* is this? What is this closing around me like irresistible destiny? Why cannot I awake, arouse from this? I know I'm free; *why* can't I use my freedom? What a spell, what a mystery, what a horror! Oh! my Heavenly Father! If I could awake! I lose my free will! Oh, fate! fate! fate! thy hand is on me, and there is *no* resisting it!"

Thus the pinions of her weak will fluttered in the iron grasp of a strong and implacable one.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PHANTOM'S WARNING.

"Let me gaze for a moment that e'er I die
I may read thee, lady, a prophecy,
That brow may beam in glory awhile,
That cheek may bloom and that lip may smile,
But clouds shall darken that brow of snow,
And sorrow blight that bosom's glow"

MISS L. DAVIDSON.

SCARCELY was the school dismissed the next evening, before the carriage of Mrs. Gardiner Green drew up before the door. The liveried footman of Mrs. Gardiner Green descended from behind and opened the door and let down the steps, and Mrs. Gardiner Green hereby alighted and entered the hall. Sophie received the pompous lady at the door; Mrs. Gardiner Green took the poor girl in her arms and kissed her, then *conducted* rather than followed her into the parlor. They sat down. After a little preliminary conversation the lady began:

"My dearest Miss Churchill, I have come at the suggestion of our mutual friend and reverend pastor, Mr. Withers, to offer you any aid or advice that the present crisis of your circumstances may demand. Now no blushing, my dear Miss Churchill; look upon me as a mother—as a sister," said the lady, quickly correcting herself. "In short, Miss Churchill, I have come to propose that you be married from our house."

Now this was said so coolly, taking the premises so much as a matter of course, that Sophie, poor cowardly Sophie, had nothing at first to say.

The lady went on with her proposals, entering into all the details of wedding dresses, bridesmaids, brides-cake, and a vast deal of matronly information and advice. At last Sophie could bear it no longer; she arose nervously from her seat and turned to the window, every limb trembling, and her voice faltering as she said—

"I am not going to be married to

Digitized by Google

Withers, Mrs. Green—I am very sorry everybody seems to think so—it is not true—will you do me the favor to contradict it wherever you may hear it?" And now she turned towards her. Mrs. Gardiner Green looked perfectly aghast; she evidently knew her part.

"Then, Miss Churchill, as your mother's oldest friend, may I ask,—*what* is the meaning of the minister's nightly visits to you?—for know, Miss Churchill, that unless they portend marriage, not even his sacred cloth will *prevent*, but rather *augment* the scandal that will ensue. Miss Churchill, I would not for the world that any thoughtless or malicious person should hear you say what you have just said; but, Miss Churchill, again I ask you—why have you permitted his nightly visits for three months past?"

"I could not help it—*how* could I help it?—should I have thought of telling our minister to keep away? I thought whatever our minister said or did was right, and could not be misconstrued, or I am afraid, I am *sure*, that until now, I never thought about it."

"No, Sophie, that is it—*you never thought about it*—your thoughtlessness in permitting the visits of gentlemen in your unprotected condition had already nearly ruined you, when the kindness and candor of Mr. Withers rescued you from the neglect and obscurity into which you had fallen; and now his very kindness will through your thoughtlessness be converted into a greater misfortune to you and himself, that is, if you do not marry him; but of course you will do so, Sophie."

Sophie Churchill was sitting before her; the palms of her hands pressed together; her eyes raised imploringly to the countenance of the lady.

Sophie was utterly unconscious of this attitude of supplication. It was the involuntary appeal of a weak will to a stronger one.

"Oh! I never can—I *never can* marry that man—death—*death* would be better."

"Yet, Miss Churchill, you have seemed to speak sometimes as if you took pleasure in his society."

"When he reads or converses I like to hear, or *have* liked—I shall never like it again; but if his eye runs from his book and fixes on my face—I—oh!—I can't tell you, but at the very idea of marrying him I grow deadly sick and faint."

Mrs. Gardiner Green, with her obtuse sensibilities, did not understand this, but she answered coldly—

"There is no one to compel you to do justice to Mr. Withers, Miss Churchill—no one to force your inclinations in any way; still, as your mother's friend, I must advise you to bring no reproach upon her memory by your lightness of conduct; as your brother's friend I must entreat you not to injure the prospects of his young daughter by your selfishness; and as the friend of Mr. Withers, I must conjure you not to destroy his usefulness by your fickleness and unfaithfulness."

She continued to talk, using all the arguments of a hard woman of the world, with a nervous, sensitive, and somewhat visionary girl, and at the end of two hours more, left Sophie very well prepared to receive, or *rather*, very incapable of resisting her destiny and her master. It was near sunset when the lady's carriage rolled away from the door. When she was gone Sophie sank down on the steps of the piazza, and resting her elbows on her knees, dropped her face into the palms of her hands, and gave herself up to despair. She sat there until the sun went down—she sat until the stars came out—she sat there until she felt a light hand fall upon the top of her head. She looked up, and the phantom of the forest dell stood before her, the same wan, spectral face—the same large, intense, blue eyes, blazing in their hollow sockets, surrounded by their livid, bluish circle—the same streaming yellow hair, with its streaks of grey—the same emaciated claw-like fingers. Her intense gaze sought and met Sophie's eyes, and she knew that her visitor was a denizen of earth. She remained gazing into Sophie's eyes a minute, and then she broke forth with terrible energy:—

"*Do not marry him!*—risk—suffer *anything* but that! *Do not marry him!* Be true to your instincts—they warned you at your first meeting, they warn you *now!* Be true to your instincts! They were given you of God for your protection; it is a sin—it is a *sin* to disregard them, and the punishment—the punishment will be more than you can bear!—a broken heart!—a maddened brain!—at least—*at least* a blighted life! Look at me!"

She tore the mantle from her breast and displayed a skeleton form, to which the tight skin clung.

"Who are you, in the name of Heaven?"

"I *am* a shadow—a memory—a *warning!* I *was* his wife!"

"Great God!"

Sophie raised her eyes just in time to see the tall figure of the minister near the shadowy woman, and his strong hand fell upon her shoulder. He had approached unperceived. She shrieked—sprang from under his grasp, and fled towards the river. He looked after her in dismay, apparently with an impulse of pursuit. When she had disappeared over the cliff, and down the bank, he turned to Sophie.

"Who is that woman, Sophie?"

"YOUR WIFE!" said the girl, raising her eyes bravely now to meet his gaze.

"You were always a little brain-sick, Miss Churchill, but really this—or perhaps you are only jesting."

"Do I look like jesting? Is yonder unfortunate a subject for jest?"

"Then you are clearly insane—moon-struck as your lunatic visitor. Pray can you tell me what put such an extravagant idea into your head?"

"Her own word."

"Her own word—the mad fancy of a maniac!"

"At least, Mr. Withers, you will not think of pressing your suit, or even renewing a single visit, after such a revelation."

"Will I not? I have two urgent duties to perform now—one is to seek that lunatic, and have her taken care of; the other to hasten our marriage, Sophie, that everything seems to endanger, from naval officers to strolling maniacs."

"She is your wife!—I know she is! Every glance into your face deepens the conviction I feel."

Digitized by Google

"Do you not know that I lost my wife while living in the North?"

"You lost her, but how?—by *death?* Possessions and persons are lost sometimes, and *found* again. Nothing but the grave is inexorable. Come, has the grave inclosed your wife?"

"Insulting! insolent! Take care, Sophie, you are heaping up wrath against a day of wrath."

"*You are!* Were this incident known in the neighborhood—"

"You would be laughed to scorn for your credulity. *Nonsense*, Sophie! Were the letters I brought here of so little weight?—was the approbation, the warm friendship of the venerable and sainted May, of such little worth, that the fancies of a moon-struck woman should be able to injure me, or should change my views and purposes towards you? Come, Sophie, it is best that you understand me. *I have no wife.* I assure you, upon my honor—my untarnished truth, Sophie, that I have no wife, and I *must* have you! Your hand is the *one* thing that I wish on earth, and I *must, must* have it—*will* have it."

Sophie was weeping bitterly. He stooped down, took her chin in his hand, and raised her tearful face, then sat beside her, and said, more gently than he had yet spoken—

"Come, Sophie Churchill, I am no hypocrite, no villain, and God knows it. I have been the most unfortunate and the most injured man, perhaps, that ever lived; and some day, when you are prepared for it, you shall know it. As for the woman, poor creature, she must be cared for; and now, lest you should perchance cherish in your heart another suspicion, which yet you would never breathe, I will volunteer to say that I have never wronged that woman—never, so help me Heaven! Dismiss her from your mind, Sophie, and tell me, has Mrs. Gardiner Green been to see you?"

"Yes, sir," murmured Sophie.

"And between you, you settled the day for our marriage."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Never mind *but*—what day did you fix?"

"Mr. Withers, that is all over now—Mrs. Green, herself, if she knew—"

"Never mind, my dear; what day *had* you fixed?

"Then we *had* fixed the fifteenth."

"Thank you, Sophie!" and he sealed his thanks upon her lips, arose, and bidding her good night, left the spot.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WANDERER'S DEATH.

"Oh, ask me not to speak her fate,
Oh, tempt me not to tell
The sin that made her desolate,—
Passion she could not quell.
Alas! the grave can only be
Fit refuge of her misery."—ANONYMOUS.

"SOPHIE, your cheeks are pale, and a livid blue circle surrounds your eyes; you do not look like yourself—you are ill; do not keep school to-day—give a holiday and rest." These were the words addressed by Mrs. May to her friend on the day succeeding the events related in the last chapter. She had ridden over, attended by Augustus Wilde, to spend the day with Sophie and help her to teach. They were standing in the school-room just before calling the pupils.

"Yes, Miss Churchill, *do* give a holiday to-day for my sake, as well as for your own," said Lieutenant Augustus, setting his cap and riding-whip down upon the desk. "On Thursday my week's leave of absence expires. This is the last day I shall have an opportunity of spending with you, and you look weary from confinement and work; everything points to a holiday—come!"

Sophie smiled a sickly smile, and said she was very well.

"But I do not think so, and I never believe a *smile* unless the *eyes* smile too," said Emily; "now *I* am going to give oliday;" and so saying, she went into the yard, called the children together by a bell, and told them to go home, for there was to be no school that day. Sophie Churchill was ever too yielding, and now, in the languor of dejection, she made no opposition.

"Now, Sophie, we will go a fishing," said Mrs. May, as she returned after dismissing the children, "the fresh air off the bay will revive you."

"And I, Miss Churchill, feel very anxious for a forenoon's frolic on the waters, if that is any argument," said Lieutenant Gusty, and he sought Sophie's eyes; but *they* were bent upon the ground, or, when raised, their intelligence, their light, their sympathy for *him* was gone. He *felt* this, and his heart sank. Had he offended her? and how? He wished to speak to her, or to his sister apart, and ask the reason, but he could not speak to either upon the subject, in the presence of the other. It is a feature in human sympathy, that one may be in company with two equally loved and trusted friends, to *either* of whom *apart*, one would confide the secret that oppresses—for there is a feeling of security, exclusiveness, sacredness, between *two* friends conversing, that is lost when a *third*, however equally dear to both, enters in—the electric cord of full sympathy and confidence has but *two* ends. The Jesuits understand this, for by a statute of their order it is forbidden that less than *three* members go apart, or converse together. Now, Augustus Wilde felt this without reasoning upon it.

Miss Churchill put on her bonnet, and they were soon down upon the beach under the promontory; the gravelly beach was clean and cool, and the waters blue and clear, and sparkling in the beams of the early sun, and all the golden clouds were reflected on their bosom. The little skiff was soon unmoored and they were out upon the bay; as they receded from the shore, Lieutenant Wilde stood up and turned to look upon the promontory, or rather peak, surmounted by the old hall; his eye rested a moment upon the towering object, and then wandered down to where the promontory descended into the heath, and further on, where the heath flattened into the moor. He had just said, while gazing on the scene, "I am no agriculturist, Miss Churchill, yet I never saw what

Digitized by Google

I think to be so fine an estate in all the gifts of nature as this—the moor with its wild fowl, the river and the bay with their fish and their oyster-banks, the forest in the background with its wood and its game—it is inconceivable how the property has been suffered to—" and then he stopped, started, and gazed at an object on the water between them and the land—

"What is the matter, Augustus?" said Emily, attempting to rise. He pushed her down into her seat again, while he continued to gaze upon the floating object as it was borne upon the waves towards the beach.

"What *is* the matter, Augustus? What are you looking at; one would think you saw a shark." And now Sophie's brown eyes were raised in silent inquiry.

Augustus sat down, muttering "Nothing, nothing," and pulled for a distant part of the shore, about midway the heath, between the promontory and the moor.

"Are you going to land?" asked Emily.

"Be quiet, will you," muttered he, pinching her arm and glancing at Sophie, who had relapsed into her abstraction.

Not until they had nearly reached the beach, had Sophie noticed their altered course; then she looked up and inquired, "Where are you going? Why this is not a good place to fish."

Lieutenant Wilde answered, "We think we have made it too late in the morning—that the sun is too high and too hot for you, Miss Churchill; and we think we will return to the hall."

Sophie remonstrated, declared she felt no ill effects from the heat, &c.; but was overruled as usual. Emily now asserting that she felt the rays of the sun too strong, they landed and walked to the hall. When they reached the parlor, Emily *purposely* removed her bonnet and scarf *there*, and Sophie taking them, carried them up stairs to put away. When she had left the room,

"*Now*, I followed your lead in coming home—tell me *why* you came; what was the matter with you—what did you see on the water?"

"You told me that Miss Churchill was very nervous and sensitive, did you not?"

"I told you, that of late she is—naturally Sophie has a strong mind."

"Well, Emily, the object I saw upon the water was a dead body."

"Merciful Heaven! are you *sure?*"

"*Certain.* I saw it distinctly—it was being wafted towards the beach."

"Heavenly Father! some poor negro, out fishing, drunk perhaps, fell overboard."

"No; a woman scantily clothed, with streaming yellow hair clinging wet around her swollen limbs. I am sure the body is by this time cast upon the beach."

"A woman with streaming yellow hair," said Emily, as the memory of Sophie's vision in the dell crossed her mind. "Can we, Augustus, get away from Sophie in any way, and go down to the beach?"

"We must make an excuse of some sort," said Augustus.

His purpose was forestalled—for at that moment the handsome blue carriage and grey horses of Mrs. Gardiner Green stopped before the door; and the lofty lady alighted and entered the house. "How do you do, Mrs. May—and Lieutenant Wilde—well, this is delightful. I am so happy to see you. I must positively have you at the Glade to-morrow evening, to meet a few friends—quite an *improvised* little affair; but where is Miss Churchill? I am enacting 'mamma' to that young lady just at the present crisis; and this morning I wish a private interview with her."

Emily seized this chance—and calling to little Hagar, sent her for Miss Churchill. When Sophie entered the room, she arose, and leaving Mrs. Green to explain her departure, took her brother's arm, and saying that she would return in half an hour, threw her handkerchief over her head and strolled out into the yard; then quickening their steps, they hastened towards the peak. Descending the cliff by a circuitous path, they reached the beach; and there, immediately under the point of the promontory, they descried an object that, upon nearer approach, they found to be the dead body of a woman. Emily May, pale with awe, knelt down to examine the body—her brother stood in silence by her side. From its extreme emaciation, the body, unlike those of most drowned persons, was not much swollen, but lay slender and extended at length—the arms confined to the waist, and the slight limbs bound together by the winding and clinging of the long yellow hair, that in beating about the waters had got twisted around her. With trembling fingers Emily removed the tress of hair that, wet and sticking to her face, partly concealed the features. She gazed earnestly and sadly upon the extinguished lamp of that dead countenance—the blue-white complexion, the thin sharpened features, the round forehead polished and shining, from very emaciation, the ultra-marine blue eyes, stony and swollen—the small elegant nose, with its delicate and half-transparent nostril—the short and beautifully curved upper lip, drawn up now blue and stiff, and exposing the little pearly teeth—and lastly, the long fine golden hair with its few commingling threads of silver—the extremely small and slender hands, thin now as birds' claws—the little naked foot, with its curved hollow and proud high instep.

"Who *can* she be?" asked Augustus; "do you know, Emily?"

His sister shook her head; she was thinking of the vision seen by Sophie in the forest dell, but she deemed it best to be silent upon that subject at present. There was a small house under the shadow of the promontory, in which sails, fishing-nets, and rods, &c., were kept; into this house, for the present, Lieutenant Wilde conveyed the body, and locking the door, took possession of the key, and advising Emily to return to the hall, he went off to Churchill Point to summon the coroner.

"Ridiculous, my dear! absurd, preposterous! *utterly* preposterous! A crazy woman wandering through the country, and saying that she is our minister's wife! and you to believe it! I shall grow thoroughly ashamed of you, Miss Churchill. Why, don't you know, my dear, that is always the way with these lunatic vagrants, to fancy themselves some great personage, *al-*

Digitized by Google

ways; all I wonder at, is that your maniac was so moderate—they are generally queens, nothing less will serve them; even old Suke Ennis, you know, is the President's wife—and carries her bosom full of waste papers that she says are his letters. A strolling lunatic suddenly appears before you, in the full of the moon, announces herself as the wife of the most important man she knows of, flees away at his approach,—and *you*, upon the strength of her moon-struck madness, believe, or more probably *affect* to believe her insane statement; you grow ridiculous. Oh! do not, for *your own* reputation for good sense, mention this to any one else. I am *mortified* at you, *alarmed* for you."

This was the manner in which Mrs. Gardiner Green received the news of Sophie's strange visitor from Miss Churchill's lips, when they had been left alone together.

"I do not think that she was a lunatic," said Sophie, seriously. "I thought she spoke sense, truth, sad, sorrowful truth."

"'Sense,' 'truth,' the maddest of them can speak sense and truth sometimes; but her very *statement* proves her lunacy—do not we all know better—don't we know that the wife of Mr. Withers died two years ago?"

"I think that is an impression that has been generally received, but I think that the opinion has no good foundation in fact; now that my mind fixes itself upon the subject, I remember that in his letter to Mr. May, he speaks of the 'loss,' never of the *death* of his wife."

"Oh! I have no *patience* with you! 'Loss,' what could it have been but *death!* Think of Mr. May's warm regard—but I will *not* argue with you upon this most injurious suspicion—it is an insult to Mr. Withers to hear or reply to such—pshaw! No, Miss Churchill, you have seized this, as the drowning catch at straws, to save you from fulfilling an engagement, which only since the arrival of this gay young officer has grown distasteful to you. But I tell you plainly, Sophie—Miss Churchill, I should say—that if you break this engagement, as you will not, I think, venture to do—I shall be obliged, however unwillingly, to abandon you. I have a daughter," here the proud lady drew herself up, "and I must consult *her* interest before anything else. Rose Green loves you, Sophie Churchill, but if you wantonly trifle with your good name, I must sever you. Mrs. May, also, I think, could scarcely defy public opinion, by continuing her friendly intercourse with you" Sophie Churchill was sitting with her face pale, her features rigid, her eyes fixed unconsciously upon her cold white fingers idly locked together on her lap; one or two large tears gathered in her set eyes, and slowly rolled down her cheeks. "Do not weep, Miss Churchill, if I talk to you plainly; it is to set things in a proper light before you; I speak to you as I would speak to Rose, under like circumstances. Your duty is very plain; the day of your marriage is fixed, go forward with the preparations for your wedding. I am here to lend you assistance, not to tolerate weakness, vacillation, and infidelity."

Sophie remonstrated now no more; unresistingly she suffered the circle of destiny to close around her. More than the force of circumstances—more than the *strength* of others—more than our own *weakness* does our *indolence* leave us at the mercy of fate. Adverse external powers are at work upon us, surrounding us, contracting their circle upon us; we feel an inward reposing strength that, aroused, might struggle and overcome; but we are inert, we yield to their influence, they close upon us; we sigh, and call it *fate*. It was thus with Sophie Churchill. In vain the whisper of her true interests arose from the deeps of her soul, saying—"Speak! and break through this enchanted circle—*you* are right, *she* is wrong. Have faith in God, believe *yourself*, trust in the candor and friendship of Emily, in the intelligence, goodness, and *love*—yes, *love* of Augustus; awake! arise! and save yourself." Alas! the voice was heard in vain. It could not be *stilled*, but it was not obeyed. Still sat she there with cold clasped hands and rigid features, letting fate encompass her, but feeling in her profoundest soul the painful consciousness that *she herself*, and not another, was making her own misery.

Emily May now entered, but Sophie was too much absorbed in her sorrow, Mrs. Green too much interested in the subject on hand, to notice the absence of Lieutenant Wilde, or the unusual seriousness of her countenance and manner. Emily silently took her seat, without mentioning the occurrence of the hour. With an instinctive fear of leaving Sophie alone with Emily then and there, Mrs. Gardiner Green dismissed her carriage and announced her intention of remaining the day, and of returning in the afternoon with Mrs. May. Emily observed the dejection of Sophie, but silently attributed it to ill-health, weak nerves, &c., and dwelt slightly upon the circumstance, her thoughts being engaged with the drowned woman then lying in the fish-house.

That morning Mr. Withers had been requested, upon account of the sparse population, to form one of a coroner's jury, to sit upon the case of a drowned *person*, at four o'clock in the afternoon, at Heath Hall. The hasty summons conveyed no further information. With a strange abstraction of mind he had not looked deeply into the subject of the note—and penning a hasty answer, he promised to be on the spot at the appointed hour.

The dinner-table had been cleared away at Heath Hall. Mrs. Gardiner Green had sustained the chief burden of the conversation all day. Lieutenant Wilde had not returned; and to the inquiry of Mrs. Green relative to his absence (which, by the way, she rejoiced in), Emily had replied that sudden business had recalled him to the village, and there the subject dropped. She still refrained from mentioning the occurrence of the morning. Then Mrs. Gardiner Green, taking advantage of the momentary absence of Miss Churchill, informed Mrs. May that the marriage day of her dear young friend Sophie Churchill with Mr. Withers, was fixed for the fifteenth of the current month; that thus it would take place in little more than a week from that day—that the ceremony would be performed at her house, &c., &c. Emily received this information with pain and surprise, but was prevented replying by the re-entrance of Sophie. She was no longer at a loss to guess

Digitized by Google

the reason of Miss Churchill's ill looks; she turned her head away, for her heart was swelling and her eyes were filling with tears. They were engaged then, she thought. Well! well! she had hoped it would have been otherwise, but they were engaged—the marriage near at hand. As Emily looked from the window she started on observing a small cavalcade approaching the house, and muttering to herself—"Oh! how thoughtless, how careless of Augustus," went out to meet it. It was the dead body of the drowned woman borne along on a litter. "Oh, *why* have you done this, Augustus?" she asked of her brother, as the litter was set down in front of the piazza.

"Why, I could not very well prevent it," said he, pointing to the two or three old country magistrates in the train, "besides Miss Churchill cannot be shocked at what she is prepared to see—you have surely informed her?"

"No, I have not; I should have done so, could I have guessed that they would have brought the body here."

"Why, dearest Emily, this was the nearest house, the coroner's inquest was appointed to meet here, also."

Emily May requested them to pause with the body until she could go in and announce their arrival to the mistress of the mansion. She need not have feared for Sophie's nerves *then*. When we are in deep trouble we are in excellent order to receive *bad* news; it does not shock us, little can shock us when in sorrow, except joy. Let me illustrate, when we are already *cold* we can bear a *cool* draught. Sophie gave her consent almost indifferently for the corpse to be brought in, and the three ladies withdrew to the upper story. In another quarter of an hour it was laid out in the parlor. Emily had dropped no hint to Sophie of her suspicion of the identity of the drowned woman with the wanderer she had seen in the forest dell, and Miss Churchill was entirely without suspicion as to who it could be. Mrs. Gardiner Green was full of exclamations of wonder, grief, and horror. Four o'clock drew near, and the jury summoned by the coroner began to assemble; many other persons impelled by curiosity also came. When the room was nearly full, and the hour appointed for holding the inquest arrived, it entered the head of the coroner to request the attendance of the lady of the house as well as of Mrs. May, whose testimony, as one present at the finding of the body, was required. A message was sent up-stairs, and Mrs. May and Miss Churchill, accompanied by Mrs. Gardiner Green, entered the room. The corpse was laid out upon boards in the centre of the room; it was covered by a black velvet pall—the body had not been uncovered since the assembling of the jury. The ladies entered and took their seats.

"What are we waiting for now?" inquired a gentleman present.

"For Mr. Withers, who is on the jury," answered the coroner.

At this moment Mr. Withers entered, and the inquest began. The coroner, going to the head of the bier, turned down the pall, and summoned Mr. Wilde to give in his evidence. At the first uncovering of the corpse, many had bent forward to obtain a glimpse of the face, Mr. Withers among the rest; he had been standing near Sophie, whom he had not omitted to greet, and now he leaned forward. By reason of his height, he obtained a good view, *for a single instant*, then covering his face with his open palms, he groaned forth in tones of bitter anguish—

"God! Oh, God! *Fanny*," and dropped like a lifeless mass into his chair. The intense curiosity of all present directed to the corpse prevented the agitation of the minister being observed. Lieutenant Wilde identified the corpse as the body found by himself in the morning. Emily was then summoned, and corroborated the statement of her brother. When she was about to leave the stand she was asked—

"Did you ever see or hear of this woman before?"

"I never saw her before this morning, when I saw her dead upon the beach."

"Did you ever hear of her before?"

"Yes—no—yes!—*no*, I never—" said Emily, confused between fact and fancy. Her confused answer drew upon her a close cross-examination, during which she alluded to the vision seen in the dell by Miss Churchill. She was then dismissed, and Sophie Churchill called to the stand. Sophie had been sitting in a remote part of the room—she had not bent forward as others had to view the corpse—hence she had not seen it at all; to the examination of the witnesses she had paid slight attention. Not one word of Emily's testimony had she heard, by reason of the low tone in which Emily spoke. She arose when called, approached the bier, and when told to look upon the body, and say whether she had ever seen it before, she languidly cast her eyes down upon it, and recognised the apparition of the dell—the moonlight visitor of the Hall—started—tottered—and with a smothered cry sank back in the arms of the coroner in a swoon. All the company looked dismayed. Augustus Wilde sprang forward to receive her, took her from the coroner's hold, and telling him angrily that he had exceeded his authority, bore her into the air, and sitting down with her on the steps of the piazza, hastily loosened her dress and fanned her with his cap. Emily was by his side, she had followed them; Sophie opened her eyes, and then resigning her to Emily's care he returned to the hall, meeting Mrs. Gardiner Green bustling out to look after her protegée.

The verdict, "death by drowning," was rendered, and the jury broke up. The coroner and magistrates had decided that the body should be buried from the Hall in the family burial ground, with the consent of Miss Churchill. The magistrates were taking their hats and preparing to depart, when the figure of Sophie Churchill, pale and haggard as though newly arisen from the grave, appeared among them.

"I have testimony to give, and I *must* give it," she said.

The magistrates looked surprised, the company eager—Mrs. Gardiner Green, frowning, sat down. Emily, pale and expectant, stood by Sophie's side.

"The inquest is over," said Mrs. Green at last. "Your testimony will be supererogatory, Miss Churchill."

"Her deposition can be taken by a magistrate," said Lieutenant Wilde.

"Miss Churchill is not now of sound mind

Digitized by Google

she is ill, her testimony cannot be taken," persisted the proud lady.

Sophie Churchill was now standing by the side of the corpse—all eyes were turned towards her—*her* eyes were bent straight forward across the room upon the bowed and shuddering figure of the minister; he *felt* her gaze, he raised his head; her eyes full of deep reproach and dire determination encountered his—no longer cold and glittering like ice, and freezing the blood in her veins—oh, no! the anguish of a tortured soul *groaned* through their glance—"*Mercy!* Sophie." That glance inspired Sophie's heart with pity, but it was too late now, or *she* thought it was too late to retract. The magistrate commenced his examination. To his question—

"When did you first see this woman?" she replied by relating the adventure in the dell. "And her finger pointed at the—at the Rev. Mr. Withers?"

"Yes, sir," replied Sophie, turning her head to avoid looking at the tortured countenance of the minister.

"Did she speak?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did she say?"

"Gazing intently at me, and pointing to the minister, she said, 'shun him!'"

All eyes now turned in wonder and curiosity from Sophie to the minister.

"Did you ever see her after this?"

"Once."

"Where?"

Sophie now related the visit to the Hall.

"And she claimed to be Mr. Withers's wife?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she appear to you to be of unsound mind?"

"No, sir."

"You may stand aside."

The magistrates conversed apart for a while, then one of their number said,

"Will Mr. Withers be kind enough to step forward?"

The minister arose, and collecting and composing himself with an effort, approached the table—all conversation was suspended—all eyes were fixed upon him—he felt it.

"Will Mr. Withers oblige us by telling all he may know of this unfortunate young person—of course we have no sort of right, *now*, to ask it—we appeal to the courtesy of Mr. Withers to satisfy an interest that we all feel in this most unfortunate young stranger?"

Mr. Withers bowed, and declared himself ready to answer any question upon the subject.

"We have no intention or desire to subject Mr. Withers to a legal examination," said the first speaker, "we merely wished, that if it were not unpleasant, Mr. Withers would oblige us by volunteering such information as might be in his possession."

"Is she your *wife*, Mr. Withers?" chucklingly inquired an old country squire, who did not believe what he asked, but whom neither time, place, nor circumstance could debar from his jest. "Is she your *wife?*"

"No, sir," answered Mr. Withers, with dignity, "she is not my wife, gentlemen. I *do* know this young woman, have known her from a child; her life for the last three years has been full of passion, sin, suffering, and sorrow that eventuated in insanity, and has ended as you may see in suicide. For the last year she has been my pensioner, and an inmate of the ——— lunatic asylum. A few months ago I was informed by letter that she had escaped; yesterday evening I discovered that she was in this neighborhood, by coming upon her suddenly while she was conversing with Miss Churchill. I believe she followed me to this neighborhood, yet at my approach she fled. That was last night, her body was found this morning. This is all I have to tell, sirs." He made a ceremonious bow, and retired from the table. The company gathered in groups to converse upon the singular event—the strange statement of the wanderer, given in the evidence of Miss Churchill, was scarcely noticed—just set down as the raving of a maniac. Withers approached Sophie, and, stooping, hissed in her ear, "Most cruel girl! do you deem what you have made me suffer? I have been stretched upon the rack, but you—you—*you* are piling up wrath against a day of wrath. Mark *that*, Sophie Churchill!"

The poor girl, after her extraordinary effort, had relapsed into utter languor, but she raised her languid eyes, and murmured,—

"I think *you* are."

He stopped, glanced around—no one was now observing him—stooped, and said,

"What do you mean, Sophie? Do you think that I have ever wronged a hair of that poor creature's head? No, Sophie, no—no, as I hoped to be saved, *never!*"

He moved away from Sophie, and going to Mrs. Green, said,

"My dear madam, I wish you to take Miss Churchill home with you this evening, and keep her there for the next two weeks; her health is sadly shaken by these exciting events. As for the school we must procure a substitute, or it must for the present be disbanded. I will remain here and attend to this interment."

The company were getting into their saddles to depart. Mrs. May, Mrs. Green, Lieutenant Wilde, and Mr. Withers, remained to tea.

The golden beams of the setting sun that were shining through the foliage of the shade trees, making their leaves glisten like emeralds, and falling upon the piazza, were somewhat intercepted by the figure of Lieutenant Gusty as he walked up and down the piazza, ruminating to this effect, "Shall I now, or shall I not? I wonder if it is too early. I have known her only a short time, it is true, but then, how dearly I love her, and how wisely, the regard of my excellent sister proves. I am going away in a day, to stay three years; if I don't speak now some one else may speak before I have another chance." The entrance of Sophie from the house decided him by inspiring a sudden impulse. She had come out, and not seeing him, walked slowly up to the further end of the piazza, hung her head over the railing, and remained fixed in that attitude. Gusty walked rapidly up to her, and then back, and then up again, and then back. The third time approaching her, he said, while standing behind her,—

"*Hem!* Sophie, you *know* you rather like me! and *I* know it too, because Emily says so. And *I*, Sophie—well, never mind about me! So, Sophie, when I come back from sea again in three years from this, will you—will you—will

Digitized by Google

you *have* me? Now consider the circumstances, and don't say, my own dear Sophie, that my proposal is *too soon*."

"*It is too late—too late*, dear Gusty," she said, turning round; her eyes were fixed and despairing.

"Too late," he echoed, looking stupidly at her.

"Too late," she repeated; "I am betrothed. Even your sister—*my* dear sister Emily, thinks that there is no escape *now*. I have just had a conversation with her."

"You—you are betrothed—to—to *whom?*"

"You surely guess—to Mr. Withers."

He walked up and down the piazza with folded arms, chin bowed upon his bosom, eyes bent to the ground. At last he paused before her—bashfulness was gone now.

"Look at me, Sophie! oh, my soul's love, look at me!" She raised her eyes to his fine countenance—he *had* a fine countenance. Curls black, silky, and shining, clustered around a brow fair, round, and polished as a woman's—his dark eyes, now full of Heaven's own love and wisdom, were bent upon hers.

"My own loved sister—my own heart's darling, *we* are betrothed. Oh, believe it, Sophie!—believe it! *We* are betrothed, Sophie! Listen! You have never loved before?"

"*Never*, Gusty!

"And mine also is a virgin heart; beyond a general kindliness of feeling towards *all* women, I have never loved before. Oh! Sophie, are *we* not betrothed by God himself? Break through this other engagement forced upon you by circumstances, and give me your hand. Let us marry *this evening*, Sophie, and let me leave you with my sister until I come back—my own dear Sophie, *do this*. I would not for my soul's salvation do anything or advise you to anything wrong, but indeed, my Sophie, I feel such a *right* to you, such a *claim* upon you, such a *property* in you, that I should feel myself wronged and ruined by any one who should wrest you from me."

She gazed unconsciously, entranced, up to his pure clear brow—to her it seemed the brow of an angel, and into his beautiful eyes, full of earnest strength, half pleading, half commanding, fixed upon her own. With an hysterical gasp and sob she fell forward; he caught her, strained her to his bosom. Her form was convulsed with emotion, her breast heaved strongly, heavily, and then her tears broke forth in floods; she wept abundantly upon his bosom. At last her emotion subsided. As the rain expends the clouds, clears the atmosphere, and refreshes the face of nature, so do tears relieve the heart, clear the brain, and renovate the system. Sophie's emotion subsided, and then she quietly rose and said,

"There, Gusty, it is over. Oh, my dear brother—*my brother*, let us be calmly wise. We may meet in heaven, but here, upon this earth below, we must never meet again, Gusty; we must never see each other's face—hear each other's voice again."

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of Emily, who came to tell Sophie that Mrs. Green was preparing to go. Sophie extended her hand to Augustus, who caught and pressed it to his lips. Then she re-entered the house.

"No more of that, Augustus," said Emily, "you must think of her no more; she is to be married in nine days to Mr. Withers."

The young man turned around hastily, and, with the occasional impetuosity of his nature, replied,

"Think of her no more! Confound you, Emily! you talk as lightly, as composedly, of thinking of her no more, as though you spoke of a new coat—a visit. 'Think of her no more!' why, in the name of Heaven, did you throw us together—tell me that?"

"Why? because I wished you to love and marry. Alas! I did not know, though it was rumored in the neighborhood, that Withers seriously thought of her, and could not have believed that they were engaged." The young man groaned. "You will get over this when you are once more at sea. Come, Gusty, get up our horses, we must return home."

Mrs. Green, with Miss Churchill and Mrs. May, attended by her brother, left Heath Hall, and rode on to the point where three roads parted in company. Then Emily and her brother rode up to the carriage door and took leave. Augustus took Sophie's hand in his own, their eyes met—their *souls* met, in one intense and agonizing gaze, and parted. He left the neighborhood the next morning.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

"Yet it may be more lofty courage dwells
In one weak heart which braves an adverse fate,
Than his whose ardent soul indignant swells,
Warmed through the fight, or cheered through high debate."
MRS. NORTON.

A WEDDING was Mrs. Gardiner Green's delight. In Maryland and Virginia, a country wedding promises festivity for weeks to come. The marriage ceremony takes place at *night*, in the presence of the *élite* of all the neighboring counties. Visitors from a distance remain all night. The breakfast next morning is a state affair; it is followed by a dinner-party and ball, given at the house of the bridegroom's parents or that of some of his friends. Then the nearest relations give balls in succession; then the most intimate friends. Generally the bride and bridegroom, with their attendants, remain all night at the house where the dinner and the ball are given. Thus a marriage in high life in the country throws a quiet neighborhood into convulsions for weeks, making it resemble a city in the height of the "season." It is a downright windfall to the young men and girls, and it is a country proverb that "One marriage makes many." In the approaching marriage of Miss Churchill and Mr. Withers there was one serious drawback to the pleasant anticipations of the young men and maidens. The bridegroom was a clergyman; therefore there could be no balls, only the wedding and dinner parties. Mrs. Green was in her glory—her preparations for display were magnificent; the wedding dresses, confectionery, &c., had been ordered from Bal-

Digitized by Google

timore and were arrived. And Sophie, she was now quite resigned; she had been the guest of Mrs. Green since the day of the inquest. Mr. Withers had recovered his composure, and was with her, as usual, a part of every day. Sophie's brain and heart were in an apathy. The only action of her mind was an indolent surprise at the indifference she felt for everything going on around her, the deadness of all sensibility, the stillness of her nerves; even the frigid and formal kiss of Withers imprinted on her hand at meeting, or at parting, no longer sent an ague thrill through all her veins—the contentment of despair had come.

The evening of the marriage arrived; the handsomely furnished house of Mrs. Gardiner Green was elegantly decorated and thrown open from attic to cellar to the numerous expected visitors. Mrs. Green herself, elegantly attired, was superintending the bridal toilet of Sophie in the dressing-room of the latter. The dress of Miss Churchill, prepared by the taste of Mrs. Green, was a white satin skirt, and over that a white gauze embroidered all over with silver flowers, a large white lace veil, looped up above her brow by a single small diamond star, leaving room to the slight elegant wreath of orange buds that lightly rested on her smoothly braided hair. Rose Green and another young lady of the neighborhood attended her as bridesmaids. A murmur of admiration ran through the crowded parlors as Sophie was led in by Mr. Withers, and the bridal party took their stand in the centre of the room. The bishop of the diocese, summoned from Baltimore, was in attendance to perform the ceremony. He wore the usual full wide black gown of an Episcopal clergyman. The bridal party stood before him cheerily; the young bridesmaids and groomsmen stood in reverent *attitude*, their eyes bent upon the ground, but the corners of their lips full of dimples, scarcely repressing their smiles—stern and solemn stood the tall thin figure of the dark bridegroom, and cold and pale and quiet Sophie waited. Once she raised her eyelids, but her glance fell on the black gown and solemn countenance of the clergyman before her, and she quickly dropped them again. He seemed to her the incarnation of darkest doom. She felt a dreary sinking of the heart as the first words of the ritual fell upon her ear, as the sentence of death falls upon the criminal hearing. It was over. It was over—friends and neighbors crowded around her with their congratulations. First, Emily May drew her to her bosom, and imprinting a kiss upon her brow, whispered hastily—

"Courage, love! nothing is so illusory as the emotions of a bride; many a reluctant bride has become a loving and happy wife, many a hopeful and joyous bride has seen her happiness decay and die—courage, love."

Sophie scarcely knew who spoke these hasty words, or how she at last found herself seated with her husband and attendants by her side. Refreshments were served around, and that occupied the company for the next hour; then a low hum of suppressed gaiety was heard all over the room, among the lively young people brought together in the expectation of enjoyment, and now growing uneasy under the restraint put upon their gaiety. The young people voted the parson's wedding a stupid affair—a disappointment—quite a failure. At last, Miss Rogers, the second bridesmaid of Sophie, a merry little maiden, not overladen with veneration, jumped up from her seat, and standing before the solemn bridegroom, said—

"Now, Mr. Withers, you are very happy, or you *ought* to be, as folks call the bridegroom '*the* happy man,' and you ought to be willing for other people who are not 'happy' at least to be *merry*, poor souls. Now we young folks who are not brides and bridegrooms want to console ourselves by dancing—there! and you are worse than 'the dog in the manger' if you don't let us dance."

Mr. Withers answered,

"There is a higher authority than my own, present, Miss Rogers; I refer you to the bishop."

The girl's head slightly started back, and her eyes opened in an awe-struck gaze *an instant*, as she turned to look upon the high dignitary of the church. To Sophie's sorrowing vision he had seemed the dark minister of a dark fate; to the merry maiden as she now looked at him, he appeared a jolly old gentleman enough, so she smiled merrily, and tripped up to him, and said with saucy shyness,

"I say, Dr. Otterback, we all—we girls—want to dance; *Solomon* danced, you know; now have you any objection?"

The old gentleman took her chin in his fat hand and made her little teeth chatter like a pair of castanets, while looking down in her young face with a merry, genial kindness, he said—

"Yes, child! a very *serious* objection."

"Oh! Dr. Otterback, *now*, I don't believe it; what is it? David danced, you know, and I never feel so happy, or thank God so much for making me, as when I am dancing; *now*, Dr. Otterback, what objection *can* you have?"

"A very serious one, my child, I tell you—*this*—the sound of a fiddle plays upon my feet and legs like the fingers of little Miss Rogers upon the piano keys—sets them in motion; can't help it; the merriment and the wickedness bubbles up from the bottom of my heart, and the old man Adam grows too strong for me; now you wouldn't have me pirouetting and pigeon-winging it all around this room, would you?"

"Wouldn't I? I should love churches and bishops better all my life after," laughed the maiden.

He shook his head, patted her rosy cheek, and sent her off.

The rooms were crowded and close, though all the windows and doors were open; the night was warm, and the moon was shining brightly out of doors. At last one and then another couple began to stroll out into the lawn and garden. As a matter of etiquette the bridal party kept their seats much longer; all, except the little bridesmaid, Miss Rogers, who never minded etiquette; she mingled with the company on the lawn, until Mrs. Gardiner Green seeing her said—

"I am astonished at you, Miss Rogers; return to your post."

Then the little maiden ran up the marble steps in front of the house, and there she paused, unwilling to enter the warm rooms. The company on the lawn had wandered off into the grove, and she stood there watching their de-

Digitized by Google

parted footsteps. Her eyes wandered over the scene, and at last were fixed by a figure on the gravel walk approaching from the gate towards the house. The figure hurried nervously forward, sprang up the steps, and stood before her taking breath. He was a youth of perhaps seventeen, with a broad fair forehead and golden hair. He caught her hand and inquired anxiously,

"Are *you* Miss Churchill?"

"No, indeed, thank Heaven, I am not Miss Churchill," replied the maiden, wondering.

"Where is Miss Churchill—where is she? I must see her immediately."

"Miss Churchill is no more; Mrs. Withers is in the drawing-room."

"Good God! I am too late; it is all over then!"

"*Quite;* you should have come sooner; the bride-cake is even eaten up."

"Young lady—what is your name?"

"Blanche Rogers."

"Miss Rogers, you can procure me an interview with—with the bride."

"I will take you in and present you with great pleasure, if," laughed the young lady, "you will favor me with your credentials."

"Miss Rogers, my name is Raymond—no, I cannot tell you now; will you be kind enough to go to Mrs. Withers, and tell her that one wishes to see her for a moment at the door."

The maiden looked at him keenly, and saying to herself, "Such a boy can have no evil design," replied, hesitatingly, "Yes," and turned slowly to do his bidding, looking back, once or twice, suspiciously. She found Sophie alone with Mrs. Green. Mr. Withers was in conversation with the bishop in a distant part of the room.

"My dear Sophie," said she, "there is a young man out in the piazza that asks to see you."

"A young man?"

"Well, yes; that is to say, a very young man—a boy."

Sophie arose and passed into the piazza, and, except her cold pale face, like a radiant visitant from the skies she looked, as her dazzling raiment of white and silver flashed in the moonbeams. At the further end of the piazza, the moon-light fell upon a slight boyish figure clad in deep mourning, and leaning upon the balustrade. Sophie approached him; he raised his head and stepped forward; she met his eyes and started, suppressed a scream, and trembling violently, leaned against the parapet, as she recognised the slender form and wan face, the intense gaze, the ultra-marine blue eyes, and the floating golden locks of the wanderer, and—

"Have you, indeed, unhappy one, risen from the grave to reproach, to warn me?" involuntarily escaped her lips.

"Be calm, Miss Churchill; I do not know what you mean by your question, since I have never been dead, and do not remember even to have seen, far less reproached or warned you."

"Who are you, then; I—I do not know whether I am sane or not. I am afraid my brain is reeling; who are you?"

"Dear young lady, I have startled you; *why* I do not see; will you give me an interview in some place where we cannot be interrupted?"

"Tell me who you are?"

"You are not afraid of me?"

"No—oh, no; but I wish, of course, to know the name and business of one who calls me out at night for a private interview."

"My name is Frank Raymond Withers; I am the only son, the only *child* of the Reverend John Huss Withers, and Fanny Raymond."

There was a dash of bitterness in the mock ceremonious manner with which he announced himself. Sophie heard him with clasped hands and earnest downcast brow. She remained in deep thought a moment; then suddenly catching his hand, she said,

"Yes, I *must* have an interview with you, where none can overhear us. Come with me," and retaining his hand and drawing him after her, she passed up the piazza, down the central marble steps, across the lawn, and taking a narrow path through the grove, led him down a deep dell, into a rustic arbor built over the spring; dropping into a seat, she said,

"Dip me up some cold water, that I may drink, and grow strong for this interview."

He performed her bidding She bathed her fevered hands and brow, she drank a deep draught of the life-giving beverage, and then she composed herself, and said, as he stood before her,

"Sit down; I *too* have something to reveal, as well as to learn."

He took a seat opposite to her.

"First, what was your purpose in seeking me, this evening?"

"To save you from a marriage that could result in nothing but wretchedness and ruin."

"Explain yourself!"

"Your husband, John Huss Withers, is—a lunatic!"

"What?"

"*A lunatic!*"

"Gracious heavens! Oh, yes! I see it all—*all now!*—that fearful light in his eyes!"

"And you will withdraw yourself from him before it is too late; you will reveal this fact and demand an immediate separation?"

"Stop, stop," said Sophie, raising her hand to her brow, "Stop, I am dizzy, bewildered; how came this about? how has he so successfully concealed it for the months that he has been with us? and is it *hereditary?* Tell me all about it."

"The malady is *not* hereditary; no member of the family was ever known to have lost his or her reason; severe domestic affliction—trials, oh! trials that would have—that might have riven the strongest, firmest heart in two, that might have shaken into chaos the best regulated mind, clouded the clearest reason. Listen, Miss Churchill. Mr. Withers, my father, was morbidly proud, his pride was brought to the dust; he was delicately sensitive; he was stricken to the heart; his health gave way; his reason failed. With the strange cunning of a lunatic, and under the favor of circumstances, he has succeeded in concealing this malady from the world. In his first one or two attacks, *I* was his keeper by chance; *after* the first two or three, he learned by the premonitory symptoms when to seclude himself; and so, no symptom, no effect of his malady has yet appeared but this: the burning eloquence, the super-human power of intellect revealed in his occasional sermons;

Digitized by Google

and, as long as it properly could be kept, in fact up to this moment, I have kept his secret; believing that if he knew it to be revealed, his proud and sensitive nature would be so shocked and wounded that the last light of reason would go out; that he would become a raving maniac. But, Miss Churchill, when I saw another person, a young girl, about to be sacrificed to him (for my father wrote to me, at college, of his approaching marriage, not deeming that I would interfere), I deemed it my duty to reveal his secret, at least, to his affianced bride. Now, Miss Churchill, you have your own fate and *his* in your power; reveal his secret, save yourself. No one in the world could blame you for separating yourself from him."

Sophie remained with her hand pressed upon her brow, so still she might have been taken for a statue.

"I am ready Miss Churchill, to aid your release by my testimony. Your marriage can be dissolved in a few days, by legislative action; do not be cast down."

"Oh! stop, hush!" said Sophie, "let me think—let me think. My God! help thy child!"

She pressed her hand upon her brow tightly, then she spoke.

"Say! you think the revelation of this secret would affect him very seriously?"

"It would destroy his reason utterly, irrevocably, I think."

"You say that this malady is accidental, circumstantial, and not hereditary?"

"Entirely—entirely the result of overwhelming affliction."

Sophie sighed deeply; "It is hard to ask a son to criminate his father; yet *justice*—tell me, were these afflictions brought about by *his sin?*

The youth paused, looked down, groaned heavily, and at last hesitatingly replied;—

"No; not by *his sin;* that were too harsh a term; by his error, or rather his *mistake.*"

Sophie sighed more heavily than before, then she said—

"Young man, you are the son of Fanny Raymond; who *was* Fanny Raymond, your mother?"

"She was the wife of Mr. Withers, of course."

"When did she die, and where, and under what circumstances?"

The youth abruptly turned and hurried from the arbor, walked distractedly up and down the plat before it for some minutes, then returning, said in faltering tones to Sophie—

"Do not ask me—*do not ask me,* I beg of you—be at ease—you are the bride of Mr. Withers, but you need not be his wife. Come, Sophie Churchill, I am ready to go with you to the house and say all, and if really needful, *more,* to the assembled company there than I have said to you. Come!"

"No," said Sophie, passing her hand thoughtfully before her brow; "Stop—stop," then after awhile she held out one hand behind her to where the youth was standing, and said, "Raymond, come to me—sit beside me—unlock your inmost heart to me, poor boy. Come—I am your friend; tell me now why do you wish to save me by exposing your father?"

He came and sat beside her, and fixing his sad blue eyes upon her face said—

"That I might not be accessary to your misery, Miss Churchill. I have kept his secret and borne the risk of concealment myself; I had no right to suffer the life of another to be risked by my silence."

Sophie sighed again, with her head bowed upon her hand, and asked—

"Is he ever so violent and dangerous, then?"

"No, not positively violent, but *dangerous,* I fear, Miss Churchill."

"He has never certainly had an attack since he has been here."

"You do not know—has he never been absent?"

"Yes, for days, when no one knew where he was; for in his reserve he would not reveal his business, and no one durst ask him."

"Ah! at such times, warned by the premonitory symptoms of his disease, he secluded himself—perhaps in the depths of the forest—perhaps threw himself on board of a packet and slipped up to Baltimore."

"Oh! how wretched, how wretched he must have been, must still be, with no one here to whom he dare trust his dreadful secret."

"And is it possible, Miss Churchill, that no one suspected it here—that no eccentricity of manner threatened to betray him to those that were about him every day?"

Sophie took his delicate hand in hers, and pressing it kindly, said—

"Raymond, do not call me Miss Churchill, or speak to me as a stranger, or as an indifferent acquaintance; I am so no longer; you must love me, and confide in me, Raymond; you and I have a mutual and a holy duty to perform."

"Yes," said he, with a bitter sigh, "we must go and make this known. Oh, my unhappy father!"

"Poor boy, you have misunderstood me; did you think," she said, passing her hand over his troubled brow, smoothing away the golden ringlets, and looking kindly in his face, "did you think that I was going selfishly to expose and abandon your father? No, Raymond—no, poor boy—I am weak, and sometimes cowardly, but never cruel or selfish—I never wantonly destroyed the smallest insect, or wounded, purposely, the worst or the lowest human being; and since I have been sitting here, Raymond, I know not what sort of a strange strength has entered my soul! Yes, your arrival just now is providential, and with your words the spirit of God has descended upon me. The Lord has given me something to do for His sake, and endowed me with strength to do it. And you are my co-laborer, Raymond. To dress the wounds of this poor warrior, beaten and bruised, bleeding and fainting on the field of the battle of life; to raise and nurse him back to life and health—this is our work."

How beautiful she looked in her young devotion,—the moonlight fell upon her fair, pure brow, clothing it with an angelic radiance.

"Oh, but the sacrifice, will you immolate yourself thus, Miss Churchill?"

"Strange! but I do not feel it as such; I feel lifted up, elevated, strengthened, filled with light and a strange joy."

"Beautiful inspired one!" exclaimed the boy, with enthusiasm.

"Come," said Sophie, rising, "let us return to the house, I shall be missed; did your father expect you?"

Digitized by Google

"He wrote that I might come if I pleased; but has he never mentioned me, Miss Churchill?"

"Never."

"Why was that?"

"Abstraction—forgetfulness—something."

"Come with me, then, I will present you to him."

"Oh, Miss Churchill—gentle Sophie—do you feel no inward resentment towards my unhappy father, for the marriage into which he has led you?"

"None in the world. Is not his reason clouded, his thoughts all jarred and out of tune? No, I feel that he was led by, to him, a blind impulse, really by Providence, to the only one who could nurse him back to health of mind and body. Raymond, we can cure this sick heart, clear this clouded brain, restore this ruin. Come!"

And they left the arbor, and took their way towards the house.

During the interview, a revolution had taken place in Sophie's soul; all her deep religious feeling, her latent passion for self-devotion, her enthusiasm, her benevolence, had been called forth. Thus softened by pity, and inspired by her own high ideal of duty, she determined to devote herself to the tranquillity of his shrunken and tortured life, with one purpose—his restoration to mental and physical health. She passed from the arbor no joyous or reluctant bride, but a high-souled devotee, in possession of duty for which she must live. An hour before, she had seemed a trembling, shrinking, suffering victim, offered in *useless, objectless* sacrifice; now, she was a cheerful, self-possessed human soul, who had solved the problem of her life, and held the answer in her hands.

Among the passions of the human soul is one not often, if ever, mentioned as such by moralists and metaphysicians: the passion of self-devotion. Yet, that this certainly exists, and deserves to be classed with the others, is proved by the large number of human beings acting under its influence. It acts in religion, in love, in benevolence, in philanthropy, and patriotism—but it is totally distinct from and independent of each—a separate passion, sometimes acting alone.

This passion, in its right motion, inspires the highly beneficial devotion of the Sister of Charity—in its perverted action, kindles the barren enthusiasm of the nun. A philanthropist, a patriot, under the rational influence of this passion, becomes as the Sister of Charity, one of the greatest benefactors of his race; under its irrational influence, becomes as the secluded nun or monk, *lost;* or as the fanatic, mischievous or dangerous to society.

They returned to the house. Meeting Mrs. Green first, Sophie led the youth up to her, and presented him as the son of Mr. Withers, just arrived from college. The lady received him with much courtesy, asked him where she should send for his trunks, and whether he would not prefer being shown into a dressing-room before being introduced into the drawing-room. Expressing his thanks with a gentle grace, he named the village tavern as the place where his baggage lay, and declining the use of a *chambre de toilette*, bowed his leave, and giving his arm to Sophie, passed into the room; the rooms were thinned out considerably, most of the company had strayed out into the garden and groves.

Mr. Withers was standing near the window in conversation with the bishop. Sophie, leaving Raymond at a short distance behind, walked up to him, and laying her small hand upon his arm, said gently and cheerfully—

"Mr. Withers, your son has come at last—you expected him, I believe."

Withers started, more at the cheerful, genial tone in which these words were spoken, than at the news they conveyed. The bishop, also, whose kindly affectionate nature scarcely let a young person pass him without a caressing word or gesture,—the bishop turned around, and patting her chin, said archly:—

"You have got over your terror, little lady; you seemed to think I was going to hang you when you stood up before me."

But Sophie stepped back, and beckoning Raymond to approach, presented him.

"How do you do, Raymond? This is my son, Dr. Otterback," were the only words of greeting or of introduction bestowed upon the youth by his father. Dr. Otterback immediately addressed his conversation to the young man, and Withers turned and looked in Sophie's face; her countenance was serene, cheerful, kindly; what *could* be the reason? he was at a loss to account for it; yet he felt the shadow and the weight lifting from his own heart, passing from his own brain. Love, charity, the very sun of the moral atmosphere when it shines out, how the vapors are lifted, how the clouds disperse, how all nature rises and smiles in its beams.

"All our friends are out upon the lawn—it is pleasant there. Will you come out, Mr. Withers?" she asked.

For the first time since she had known him, with an air of graceful self-possession and gallantry, he lifted her fair hand to his lips, drew her arm within his own, and led her forth. They sat down upon the bench in the piazza. At first she talked cheerfully of the nearest topics of conversation, the company, the night, the weather, the moon; but seeing that he relapsed into silence and dejection, she thought he felt compunction for all the ill he had wrought her, and that this compunction was awakened by her own kindness to him. She was not sorry that he felt this; yet now she wished to dissipate the gloom. Laying her hand timidly, gently, upon his brow, and raising from it the heavy mass of black hair that seemed to rest there like a cloud, she said:—

"Come, clear your brow, Mr. Withers, or you will make me fear that you regret taking under your wing a little girl like me."

"And I *do* regret it, Sophie—I *do* regret it!" he said, and sighing heavily, he arose and paced up and down the piazza several times, and then threw himself into a seat far from her. She watched him there; at first from natural feelings of delicacy she hesitated to approach him; but when he dropped his head between his hands, and sigh after sigh and groan after groan rent his bosom, she paused no longer, but arising, crossed the piazza, and taking the seat by his side, and taking his hand, she pressed it between her own. He turned and gazed inquiringly into her eyes, his gaze no longer cold, brilliant, and chilling, but still piercing, and full of anguish. Suddenly he shut his eyes, and groaning "Oh Sophie!" turned away his head

Digitized by Google

and attempted to withdraw his hand. She retained and pressed it, and again passing her soft, cool hand over his hot brow, she said, gently—

"Come, Mr. Withers, cheer up, have faith in me. I love you.—I *do*—not, indeed, with the glad love of a young bride for the young husband of her choice, but with a feeling that will stand you in better stead—that will perhaps last longer and bear more—with the serious, thoughtful love one earnest human soul that has known isolation and sorrow can feel for another, desolated, tortured, suffering, yet worthy in its anguish, of admiration and respect."

He started up, then dropped into his seat again, exclaiming—

"Sophie! I do not understand you; what is the meaning of this? What has brought about this strange, this—ah! but for *one* fact—blessed change in your feelings towards me?"

"That very fact you allude to—that *very* fact!" then dropping her voice to its softest, gentlest tones she murmured—"You have a secret that corrodes and burns your heart out—a dreadful suffering that being suppressed has gained depth, and strength, and intensity—a fearful malady that being concealed has increased in power; let it be so no longer; relieve your overladen breast; pour all your sorrows into your wife's bosom—she will never betray or forsake you. Oh! believe it. She partly knows your secret—she knows that sometimes—under some influences—a storm drives in your fine mind—that the clouds gather thick and black—the thunder roars and the lightnings flash, and that all is confusion, danger, and terror for a space—she also knows that when this storm has passed through your soul, the sun of reason shines out calm and bright. She knows all this, and she loves you for these sufferings."

He had grown as pale as death while she spoke, his features wearing the expression of deepest despair; he dropped his head upon his hands, his elbows resting on his knees, and groaned.

"Then it is all at an end, this masquerade. When was it discovered—when did I betray myself, Sophie, and who knows of this besides yourself?"

"Except your son, no one besides myself; and it is indispensable that I should know it."

"And he told you—curse—"

"Oh, do not say that!"

"I did not wish you to know it, Sophie; I was merciful, or selfish, or proud, and firm and cunning enough to keep it from you, Sophie, as I have kept it from every one else."

"Yes, and increased your own suffering and danger, and diminished the chances of cure. And, Mr. Withers, you would have suffered more in concealing your illness from me than from any one else. You would have found more difficulty in it, and dreaded more the consequences of the constantly threatened discovery. Now you have a friend and confidant—now you will be at peace, will you not?"

He drew her to his bosom and blessed her. A summons to supper now called all the company in. He arose, and drawing her arm through his own, entered the house.

CHAPTER XI.

HAGAR.

"The wild sparkle of her eye seemed caught
From high—and lightened with electric thought—
And pleased not her the sports that please her age."
BYRON.

LET me pass briefly over the events of the next few years. Four or five weeks of solemn merry-making, dull dinners, and duller evening parties, completed the wedding festivities of the minister. An agreeable change had passed over the appearance of the minister—his countenance had lost somewhat of its gloom—his manners of their austerity, and his tones their hard curtness. Sophie's demeanor revealed the sober cheerfulness befitting a clergyman's bride. Raymond accompanied them everywhere, and everywhere was the delicate beauty, and gentle grace, and pensive air of the boy admired. Little Hagar also accompanied them. Sophie and Hagar had been so united—her care and attention had been so exclusively devoted to Hagar, that now that another claimed a larger share of her time and thoughts, and now that she felt the keen eyes of the sprite-like child jealously following her every motion closely, she loved Hagar with a remorseful tenderness—strange but natural. Mothers sometimes feel the same for the children to whom they have given even a good and beloved step-father. This is an illusion, and grows out of the false idea that our love is like any material and mortal thing, limited in quantity, and that what is given to one is necessarily withdrawn from another. Sophie took Hagar with her wherever they went, even to evening parties, where the child, with the obstinacy of spoiled children in general and her own nature in particular, refused to go to bed as long as Sophie sat up.

There she would sit—the only child in a room crowded with grown people—alone, in a corner, quite neglected, her glittering eyes glancing around the room, and springing off in aversion when they fell upon the figure of Mr. Withers. She was beginning to hate him intensely, merely because he occupied so much of the time and attention of Sophie, whom she passionately loved. Her first interview with Raymond Withers is worthy of relation as characteristic of both. It was the night after the wedding, and a large party were crowded in the sober-hued parlor of Emily May. Hagar had been staying at the cottage for the last few days—and this night she first rejoined Sophie after her marriage. Here she was sitting, as I have described, neglected and apparently forgotten in a corner. Sophie could not well approach her, and Emily, ever thoughtful as she was, this evening had overlooked her, in her attention to her guests. The child's wild eyes were gleaming brightly, fiercely, under her sharply projecting brows; her preternaturally developed perceptive faculties were at work. Refreshments had been carried around twice or thrice by the servants, and they had overlooked her. At last she saw, it was the first time she had seen him, a delicate, golden-haired youth, in deep mourning, enter the room. He went directly up to Sophie and remained by her side. The keen eyes of the child were immediately riveted upon

Digitized by Google

him. There was a pensiveness, a thoughtfulness upon his fair young brow that seemed to isolate him even among the crowd. He stood by the side and a little behind Sophie's chair, and except when he stooped to catch an occasional word from her, he stood unmoved and almost unobservant in the room. Once his eyes were raised, and their sad gaze chanced to meet the wild eyes of the little girl fixed with interest on his face. He bent down, and pointing to Hagar spoke to Sophie. Sophie's glance followed the indication of his finger, then raising her countenance to his she answered him. He immediately separated himself from the party, passed into the supper-room, and returning, walked up to the child, spread her handkerchief over her lap, poured into it a plateful of cakes and sweetmeats, and took a seat by her side.

"Did Sophie send me these?" inquired the child.

"No."

"Why did you bring them, then?"

"You looked lonesome, and dull, and I thought it would amuse you."

"Ah! I thought Sophie did not send them—she never thinks of me now."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is true; she used to keep me always by her side, or on her lap; now for two or three days she has left me here with Mrs. May, and now that she has come, she scarcely speaks to me!" exclaimed the child, and her black eyes flashed under her sharp brows, and her white teeth gleamed under her upturned lip as she spoke.

A soft smile hovered an instant around the beautiful lips and under the golden eye-lashes of the youth, as he said—

"You look so like a little playful, spiteful, black kitten, that I am almost afraid of your teeth and claws—however—" and stooping down he daintily lifted the child and set her on his lap. Then he said, "I think you are a jealous little girl."

"I don't know what 'jealous' is, but I don't like to be robbed of what is mine."

"You are selfish, I am afraid, little one—who has robbed you?"

"Mr. Withers has got Sophie, and now he may have her, for I don't care."

"You are a proud little lady."

He caressed her straight black hair, adjusted her somewhat disordered dress, and began to crack nuts for her, but her eyes were fixed upon the group at the opposite end of the room, and suddenly she said—

"I wish Mr. Withers was dead—I do so!"

"Oh! horror!" said the young man, now really shocked. "Revengeful, too, Hagar! Mr. Withers is my father."

"Is he? I did not know that—I am so sorry—but, oh! he has taken Sophie away from me, and now I am *so* lonesome," and the child burst out crying.

"And where have you been, my pretty lad,
Where have you been all day?"

sang little Miss Rogers, dancing up to them—"Come, Raymond! or I beg your pardon—*Mr.* Raymond Withers—for you hobble-de-hoys are awful punctilious about your dignity—are you going to stay here nursing that spoiled brat all night? We are forming a round game at forfeits in the other room, and we want you."

"Don't go," whispered the child.

Raymond set her off his lap, arose, and apologizing to Miss Rogers, gracefully declined her invitation. The maiden pouted, smiled, threw up her head, and tripped away.

"Ain't you good, to stay with me, instead of going with her? take me up again," and she held out both her arms to him.

He smiled gently, and raised her, and how beautifully broke the glad smile over her dark, wild countenance, as she looked up in his face. From that hour the youth and infant were companions, confidants, and friends.

At this time it was that the germ of a passion, fraught with much evil to the whole of Hagar's life, took root in her heart—a passion destined by mal-cultivation to be fostered into monstrous growth—JEALOUSY; and this grew out of Sophie's thoughtless concentration of mind upon her new duty, just at this juncture; it is true that this mood of mind lasted but a few days, but in these days the seed of evil was sown.

They were settled at Heath Hall. The time occupied by them in the wedding festivities while they were inmates of the Glade—the guests of Mrs. Gardiner Green—was also improved at the Heath. Workmen had been sent thither, and the house put in some repair. The negroes had been called home from hire, and set to work in clearing up the grounds—piling the weeds, briers, and rubbish up—drying and burning them for manure—in repairing old and putting up new fences, &c. The brick wall inclosing the garden, and running round the very edge of the promontory, had been mended, the garden put in order, and the wild and desolate aspect of the whole place somewhat ameliorated. On the day of their return to Heath Hall, a dinner and an evening party of course, had been given, and that was the last. The next day they were left quietly in possession of their own home.

There, reader! Northern reader, and city reader, you have now some idea of country weddings in middle life in Maryland and Virginia,—very different, you will admit, from city weddings. Raymond remained with them until the first of September, when his college term commencing, he returned to the North. Hagar grieved wildly after him, and threw herself upon her face when the packet in which he sailed disappeared up the river. His return to college had been doubtful, but was decided by an event that had occurred about two weeks after their return to the Heath. Up to the day of their return, the health and spirits of Mr. Withers had continued to improve. In a few days after their arrival, however—after the new moon, and as it increased to its full, the sleep of Withers became disturbed, his nights were uneasy, and his days gloomy—a deadly pallor settled on his face—his features became haggard, his cheeks hollow, and his eyes sunken and glowing in their deep sockets. Now Sophie's heart trembled with uneasiness, now palpitated with alarm. Raymond was now ever at her side with words of gentle affection and cheerful encouragement—

Digitized by Google

the boy seemed old and wise beyond his years, by the preternatural development by suffering ;—he requested Sophie not to permit his father to perceive her knowledge that the terrible crisis of his malady was at hand, and they both redoubled their attentions to him. Daily his manner became more eccentric and alarming ; he would sit at the table gloomy and glowering without uttering a word during the meal—then rising up he would walk off to the forest, or the beach—Raymond following him at a safe distance. Sometimes he would look back before leaving the house, remorsefully at Sophie, would return, take her hand, and then with a sudden change of mood—his green eyes scintillating sparks of fire—fling it from him with violence, and hurry off. Raymond grew hourly more wretchedly anxious on Sophie's account. Day and night she was exposed, alone, to the danger of his violence. One morning when Sophie had come down to prepare breakfast, she found Raymond already in the breakfast-room—he advanced to meet her.

"Where is my father, Sophie ?"

"In his chamber—he has not slept the whole night."

"Sophie ! I wish to say this to you—there is a malignity in his madness now that I have never seen before—it is a new feature, and it excites my fears for you. Sophie, leave him here in my care, and go and visit your friend, Mrs. May, for a few days—*do*, Sophie."

"How, Raymond ! was my pledge given, my mission undertaken only for easy and safe duty—was there any proviso made that as soon as it became onerous, or dangerous, it should be abandoned ? No, Raymond, I will be firm through these dark days—they will soon be past, and I shall feel repaid."

"But your life—your *life* may be endangered."

"'Life'—why, Raymond, of what great value is *my* life, that it should not be risked in a good cause ?"

"I do believe, Sophie, that it was your being brought up in that room papered with the martyrs, that has given this singular bias to your character—why, Sophie, the world knowing your history in connexion with my father, would consider *you* the most insane of the two."

They were standing side by side at the window, looking out upon the bay—its rippling waves glittering in the morning sun, its dark green bosom relieved by the white sails of a packet moving up the river. They had not heard the entrance of Withers, who approached and stood behind them—his face pale, his livid lips compressed, his eyes drawn in and glowing in their deep sockets.

"But, dear Sophie," continued the youth, "we must think of some place for securing your safety."

In an instant the hands of Withers fell heavily upon his neck.

"Perfidious son of a perfidious mother !" he exclaimed, shaking him violently, "her image in heart and mind, as well as in person—traitor and reprobate ! would you wile the love of my bride away from me ? would you teach her your vile mother's sin ?"

The delicate youth was but as a reed in his grasp. Sophie sank pale and helpless into a chair. Now another figure appeared upon the scene—little Hagar stamping and screaming, upon the floor.

"Let Raymond ! let my brother alone ! Let him go, I say ! you old Satan, you. I—I'll *kill* you—I'll scratch your eyes out," and clambering upon a chair, and then upon a table, she sprang cat-like upon the back of his neck. Now he was obliged to drop his hold of Raymond a moment to shake off the little wild-cat—he seized her, and pulling her off, hurled her flying through the open window ! With a cry of anguish, Raymond sprang from the spot—from the room, and hurried around into the yard. The fall was not deep—the turf was soft—and the lithe, agile child had lighted on her feet and hands. She sprang up as Raymond came, and running to meet him asked anxiously,

"Are you hurt ? did he hurt you, Raymond ?"

He lifted her in his arms, and hurrying around the back way, ran up stairs with her.

"Oh, your poor neck—only see the marks of his wicked claws on your pretty white neck !" exclaimed the child, and she kissed and closely clasped him, and wept as if her heart were broken up and gushing through her tears. Then raising her head with eyes flashing through her tears, as the lightning gleams through the rain, she said,

"Oh ! the bad—bad—*bad* man ! I wonder what God lets him stay here for ?"

"Hush—you must not ask such sinful questions."

"But I *do* wonder—I'm sure I wouldn't let him stay here if I could help it."

"You must not think such wicked thoughts," said the youth ; but he himself was excited and anxious, and setting Hagar down on the foot of her little bed said,

"Now, Hagar, you must stay here—you must not come near him again to-day—"

"I'm not afraid of him," interrupted the child.

"No, you have the fire and courage of a young tigress ; but you would not make him angry, and so endanger Sophie's peace, would you ?"

"No—he shan't hurt Sophie ; if he tries, the next time I'll get my claws in his eyes and scratch them out—*right* out ! and *then* see who he can hurt !"

"But you are talking of my father, Hagar," said the young man, reproachfully.

"Oh ! so I am ; *that* is the worst of it."

"Now, Hagar, promise me to stay here till I come and fetch you, will you ?"

"Yes—I will do anything in the world *you* want me to do, Raymond, just see if I don't !"

"Well, then, I am going to look after Sophie, and I will be back as soon as I can."

He found Sophie extended in a swoon upon the floor. Withers was gone. He raised her and bathed her face—she revived—he set her in the deep arm chair.

"Hagar ?" inquired she, as soon as she could speak.

"Is not hurt—has neither scratch nor bruise ; she is in my chamber ; I thought it best that she should keep out of sight of my father for the present."

"What is to be done—where is Mr. Withers ?"

"I do not know where he is gone, but *you* must seek a place of safety."

"No—no—no—I will stay here ; I think I

Digitized by Google

understand now why his lunacy takes this malignant character towards you; you remind him of—but no matter—but *you*, poor bereft boy, you must return immediately to your college—I can deal with him better alone, I am sure."

"But, Sophie, you are nervous, *unfit* for this; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh, the *flesh* is weak; you swooned just now—you have not even the firmness and courage of little Hagar."

"No, not the firmness, or the *fierceness;* but I have the courage. It must be as I say; you must leave here; you are too much like—poor boy, I did not mean to wound you, indeed I did not—you must return to your college, and by the time you have finished your course there, the absence of exciting causes, tranquillity, and sympathy will have restored your unfortunate father to health; then you will return and we shall all be happy together—courage, Raymond! God is at the helm! we must not forget that. He will yet guide us safely through this rough sea and starless night; now, Raymond, go and seek him, watch him, but keep out of his sight." He left her to do her bidding.

By a natural reaction the madness of Withers now assumed another aspect. Late in the afternoon he returned and entered not *his own*, but Raymond's chamber. Sophie was in their room, and heard him come slowly up the stairs, enter the adjoining chamber, and throw himself upon Raymond's bed. She determined to go to him, though her every nerve from heart to extremities was trembling and quivering. She arose and entered the room; the white wrapper that she wore was not whiter than her cheek, as she sat down by the bedside, where his long thin figure, in its black suit, lay extended upon the white counterpane. But what a change had come over him! never even in his most rational moments had she seen him in such a mood; his manner was subdued, the expression of his countenance pensive, his tones gentle. No one that had seen him in his ordinary manner, hard, stern, harsh, and bitter, would have recognised him now—alas! this mood was as unnatural to him and as much a feature in his lunacy as was the other of the morning; it was but the reaction of his phrensy. He held his hand out to her, she took it and pressed it between her own.

"I would not go into your room, Sophie, for fear of disturbing you, and you come to me. Alas! and you are so pale, you tremble so much, poor girl, I have nearly killed you, you will give me up now!" and an expression of anguish convulsed his countenance.

"No, no, I will not; my paleness, trembling, swooning, is a matter of nerves, not of will; I cannot help it, but I will not upon that account leave you; my flesh shrinks, but my reason does not convince me of any personal risk."

"And there is none to *you*, none to *you*, Sophie, believe it: in my maddest moments I could not hurt *you*."

At this moment, Raymond, not knowing who was in the room, entered, started slightly on seeing his father on the bed with Sophie sitting by him, but quickly recovering himself, walked up to the bed, and inquired, as though nothing had happened,

"How are you now, sir?"

"Better, calmer, my boy—but oh! Raymond, my son, why had you not kept out of my way? You know, you *know* the risk you run; think if in my phrensy I were to do you a fatal injury, what would my after life be? Sophie, you see how fair and wan he is: he was more robust once, but in my first fit of phrensy while he was trying to save me from rushing into the street and exposing my madness, I dealt him a heavy blow upon the chest, injured his lungs, and he has never been well since."

"But he will be well," said Sophie, as, with her eyes full of tears, she turned and laid her hand caressingly on Raymond's shoulder, "he will get well when he has finished his studies and returns home and finds his father restored to health."

"But will that ever be, Sophie?" sadly inquired the unhappy man.

"Oh, yes, I am sure of it," she said. "Why, though I do not know much about such things, yet it appears to me so reasonable that a malady concealed as yours was, should increase and strengthen, instead of subside, and that it should darken your mind, I am not at all surprised; and I believe that now, relieved by communication and sympathy, it will gradually leave you."

This mood also changed in a few hours. As the moon waned he relapsed into the gloom and reserve of his habitual manner. By the vigilance of Sophie and Raymond, little Hagar had been kept carefully out of his sight for some days, and now when she came into his presence, in his abstraction he scarcely observed her. Sophie felt uneasy as the Sabbath approached. From the relaxed nerves of the lately overstrained brain, Sophie knew that he could not prepare a sermon, and knew not what excuse could be made, and wondered what had been his course in former emergencies of this kind. She knew *not*, that during the very fervor and exaltation of insanity he had prepared a sermon, which when delivered on the next Sabbath would electrify the whole congregation with its soul-thrilling eloquence. That sermon was the talk of the whole county for weeks. This, the reader knows, is not an uncommon feature in the exalted stages of mania. The "Song of David," written during a fit of insanity by Christopher Smart, a poet of the last century, with a rusty nail on the walls of his cell in the madhouse, is one of the most elevated and sublime strains of sacred poetry I ever read.

The first of September arrived. Raymond was gone, and the disbanded school of Sophie Churchill, or as we must now call her Mrs. Withers, re-assembled. It was continued for a few months until the end of the year, when Sophie found that she would have to give it up. In one respect a healthful change had passed over Mr. Withers. The violence of his periodical attacks of lunacy gradually subsided, but with this change grew another feature—an exclusive, absorbing, and constantly increasing affection for his gentle young wife. This, from his idiosyncrasy, became daily more jealous and exacting; he could not endure to have her out of his sight; he grew jealous, not only of the child who occupied a portion of her time, but of

Digitized by Google

the very *business* by which at least half their income was provided.

At the commencement of the Christmas holidays, Sophie broke up her school. Soon after this she received a severe shock in the news of the sudden death of her sister Rosalia and her husband, both of whom were carried off by a prevailing epidemic. This news was communicated by a letter from a lawyer of Baltimore, which letter also informed her that Mr. Withers and herself had been appointed guardians of the person and property of Rosalia Aguilar. This letter happened to come when the mind of Mr. Withers was in its least disturbed state, and therefore in a few days from its reception, Sophie left the Hall for Baltimore, with the purpose of bringing home the little Rosalia Aguilar, the second orphan niece committed to her charge.

CHAPTER XII.

ROSALIA.

"A lovely being scarcely formed or moulded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."
BYRON.

"MIND, Hagar, you must be attentive to your uncle, he is not well, my love, and you must do nothing to annoy him—now, will you promise me, Hagar?" had been the earnest injunction and question of Sophie as she was taking leave of little Hagar the morning of her departure for Baltimore. The child was silent and sulky. This argued ill.

"Oh, Hagar! will you let me depart in anxiety of mind when I may never see you again?"

Hagar was still inexorable.

"Will you not be gentle and good with *Raymond's* father?"

"Yes!" said she, raising her flashing eyes, "for Raymond's sake."

Now it must not be inferred from this that there was unmitigated antagonism between the wild child and her solemn uncle-in-law, but there was that which was far more exasperating, a capricious and fretful attraction. Sometimes highly amused or deeply interested in the child's strong, keen, and original genius, he would take her into great favor for days together, keep her always with him in his study, open to her hungry and greedy mind stores of food, win her affections, and then, at some fancied irreverence or impropriety on her part, would shake her from his hand as though she had been a viper, and drive her from the room.* And she would fly from the house, stung and suffering, to take refuge in the dark woods, among the grey rocks, or on the gravelly beach of the surging bay. The wild child took to the wild scenes of nature, as naturally as the squirrel takes to the trees, the bird to the air, or the fish to the water; and soon she was at home there, soon she learned to climb a tree with the swiftness and agility of a monkey; soon she learned, alone, to launch the boat, and wield the oar with a skill and grace that nothing but instinct could have taught, and in the very spirit of adventure she would make long voyages of discovery up and down the shores of the bay. And if a storm was brewing, if the sky was darkened and the thunder muttering in the distance, if danger was ahead, so much the more tempting and exciting was the voyage to the fearless child. The same spirit of adventure and inquiry would lead down a darksome forest-path, into the deepest dells, and most tangled thickets, and far away into the wildest solitudes of the wilderness; and the close hiss of a serpent, or the distant growl of a wolf, would only send color to the lips and cheeks, and light to the eyes of the girl, whose ardent soul panted for excitement. Do you ask where she got her fiery blood from? I do not know exactly, perhaps the spark was transmitted from some Egyptian long since. All I can tell is, that the same wild spirit of adventure had incited several of her ancestors from time to time to rebellion against church and state, had sent the founder of the American branch into the new country, and now occasionally broke out in a solitary member of the house, as in Hagar. And where was Sophie while her little charge roamed over river, creek, and bay, forest, moor, and rock, at large? Absorbed in the care of her lunatic husband, fancying Hagar safe at play, she remained in total ignorance of the child's woodland sports and salt-water voyages.

Sophie had fallen into that dangerous error so common to enthusiasts—the exclusive absorption in one duty, to the neglect of others. Sophie's self-devotion would have been good as it seemed beautiful, had it been governed by *moderation*. It has been ingeniously said by Hassler that "from its position in the solar system, neither too close nor too far removed from the centre of light and heat—*moderation* would seem to be the peculiar virtue appropriate to our earth"—and when one thinks of it, it would seem the one thing needful for a better reason than mere locality. Moderation is the moral gauge, the moral regulator, and should be president of the debating society of the passions, propensities, sentiments, and virtues. Moderation is to the heart what reason is to the head. Moderation is just precisely that hair line, erroneously said to be invisible, that divides the right from the wrong, good from evil, and virtue from vice. For see: courage is a good thing, but carried beyond the bounds of moderation it becomes rashness—which is a bad thing. Cautiousness is also good, but beyond moderation it becomes cowardice—which is bad. Liberality on the other side of the line of moderation is prodigality. Even religion, piety, which is most excellent, stretched beyond the line of moderation becomes fanaticism, superstition—which is anything but worship and honor to the Creator. I can quote Scripture for that, "Be not righteous over much."

Poor Sophie was "over much," and hence her self-sacrifice was not, as it might have been, productive of unmingled good. To Hagar it brought much evil, not only by leaving her to the pursuit of her own wild pleasures, but in subjecting her before she could understand it to

* Some people who are not lunatics treat their children in a less degree in the same capricious way; alternating unreasonable fondness with unmerited harshness; and nothing can be more fatal to the temper and character of a child.

Digitized by Google

the caprices of an unimpaired intellect excited by a nervous and bilious temperament. Her sentiments towards her uncle were at the time of Sophie's departure a singular and most exasperating blending of affection and anger, if not of positive love and hatred. He would take her into favor for weeks, and just as she was growing confident and easy in his affection, he would throw her off without a cause, and treat her with freezing coldness for other weeks; her first feeling would be a mixed emotion of sorrow and anger, and that would subside into a cold dislike, fostered by his unkind manner; and then just as she was getting to hate him comfortably, feeling quite justified in entertaining the sentiment and quite independent in consequence, lo and behold, some unexpected, and as it would seem to her, some undeserved act of kindness or tenderness would melt the iceberg in her bosom, and she could weep in very penitence for all the coldness she had felt and shown.

When Sophie left the Hall, Hagar, according to her promise, tamed her heart of fire and gave every gentle attention to her provoking uncle, who was now in one of his morose fits by reason of Sophie's absence, and therefore was very hard to be satisfied. A week passed away, during which Hagar's short stock of patience was nearly exhausted by receiving in return for all her attention cold looks, short replies, and half-suppressed grumblings—the dark sky and muttering thunder of an approaching storm.

Affairs were in this state at the Hall when the day of Sophie's expected return arrived. The packet usually put out a little boat and landed passengers for the Hall upon the beach under the promontory. Early in the afternoon, Hagar's falcon eye descrying a sail upon the bay, she ran down to the promontory, sped down the rocky declivity with the agility and swiftness of a kid, and stood upon the sunny beach to await its approach. The packet swiftly approached, stopped opposite the promontory, and a boat put out from her side, and was swiftly rowed to the beach.

Hagar sprang to meet her aunt, who stepped upon the sand, leading a little girl of about three years of age, dressed in deep mourning. Hagar had sprang up into Sophie's arms and given her a quick embrace, when the latter putting her down, said—"Kiss your cousin, Hagar."

"Yes, kiss me, Hagar," said the little one, "kiss me, love me—I've got no mother." And the large bright tears rolled down her rosy cheeks. Hagar caressed her as a kitten might caress a young dove, with its claws out. And the soft sensitive pet half evaded her wire-like clasp. "Oh! she is a city baby, used to be nursed by *white* nurses, and to step her little soft feet upon pavements, and to play with dolls in dressing-rooms; she shrinks from me, whose play-grounds are the forest, rocks, and waters—and whose toys are bows, arrows, and guns." And Hagar bent forward and gazed with her keen eyes into the face of the timid child as they walked side by side towards the ascent of the cliff. Here even Sophie's hand afforded little assistance to the unpractised feet of the infant as she toiled up the steep and dangerous cliff, glancing with terror at the sharp projecting points of the rocks sticking up ready to impale her soft form if she missed her footing. Hagar gazed at the little frightened toiler, half in pity, half in amusement, until suddenly the devil leaped into the eyes of the wild child, and seizing her cousin, she swung her upon her shoulder, and springing from the spot with the bound of a kid, scarcely touching the points of the rocks with her light feet, she flew up the steep knobs of the cliff—while Rose clung to her neck in deadly terror, and Sophie raised her hands in awe-struck astonishment. Arrived at the top safe, she set her down, panting, and tenderly as she knew how soothed her alarm. But from that moment through all her after life, Rosalia feared and shrank from Hagar.

Mr. Withers received Sophie with visible pleasure and affection; drawing her to his bosom and pressing a kiss upon her lips. But when he stooped to welcome her little charge Rosalia, he suddenly drew back, shaded his eyes with his hands, and gazed at her; then recovering himself, he welcomed the orphan with a few words of encouragement and re-assurance.

After the children were in bed that night, and while Withers and Sophie sat by the parlor fire, he said, as if half musing, "The same intense blue eyes, the same golden hair, except that both are softer." Then suddenly turning to Sophie, and speaking earnestly, he said—"Tell me, my guardian angel, is it an illusion of my wayward imagination, or does Rosalia resemble—resemble—?"

"Raymond?" suggested Sophie, with tact.

"Yes, Raymond," he replied quickly. "You have seen it then, too?"

"Yes, she *does* resemble Raymond—but that may be from her having the same colored hair and eyes, and the same delicately fair skin—which she takes from her mother, my sister Rosalia, who was of that complexion."

"Yes—but the features, the expression, that peculiar arch of the delicate upper lip, that sweeping curve of the upper lids falling over 'eyes whose light might fix the glance of any seraph gazing not on God,' and the elegantly carved hand and arm, and foot—the very form and features of—of—" he paused and sighed deeply—"of Fanny Raymond. Yes, of Fanny Raymond, as I knew her when a child—except that this child has more softness, tenderness—more lymph, if one might use the expression."

"Why do you not tell me all about it, Mr. Withers; then you would feel better, then there would be freer conversation between us; no starts, broken sentences and misapprehensions."

"Why do you wish to pry into my secrets?" asked he angrily, and rising, paced the floor with moody air and a dark brow. After a while he returned and sat down. Sophie went and sat beside him—and obtaining possession of his hand caressed it as she said gently,

"I do not wish to pry into your secrets, believe me I do not—I only wish to give you peace; after so long a time, do you not know me for your friend?"

"Well, then, Sophie, do not exasperate me by questions of my past life; at some periods I have very little self-control, as you very well know."

His moroseness increased from this hour, until a day or two after his disease broke out in phrensy. His attack had reached its crisis

Digitized by Google

passed it, and declined into gloom as before. Sophie had successfully guarded him from public exposure. Again as before, a sermon written during the exalted stage of his insanity, had electrified the whole country. It seemed strange, but it was not unprecedented in the annals of insanity, that one who had well nigh lost his reason, should at some periods perceive the points of his subject with microscopic distinctness, and argue them with mathematical closeness and precision. It was less strange, that into this perfect body of logic, his burning imagination should cast a soul of eloquence, fire, and life. His fame was spread all through the neighboring counties, and crowds flocked to hear him preach. Could they at some seasons have seen his heart, or even entered his home! And yet they knew as much, and judged as correctly of him, as many of us know and judge of some around and near us every day. Still he accomplished much good. Sophie felt this, and took heart amid her troubles. Truth, pure *truth*, loses none of its force and point by any mode of conveyance through which it reaches its object. Truth diluted with falsehood, comes weak and faint through any medium.

It would be vain to try to give you any fair idea of the winning beauty and gentle grace of the little Rosalia Aguilar, whom but to look upon was to love. She soon became the favorite of the whole house, from its solemn master down to old Cumbo in the kitchen. Hagar loved her at first, and tried to teach her to make and use little bows and arrows, and to coax her off to her forest haunts, or out on the bay; but when, after her repeated efforts, she found the gentle and timorous child still shrink from her offers of entertainment, she left her alone—and afterwards, when she felt that the loving little beauty was winning from her the little hold she had upon the affections of the household, her heart became bitter, and the jealous trait in her character grew and strengthened. More than ever she took to the desolate scenes about her native hall. She made wider excursions upon the bay, and deeper inroads into the forest—in the wild wantonness of her nature she would scale the most difficult rocks, and skim along the very edge of the most fearful precipices, or climb the tallest trees, and letting herself out upon the frailest branches, rock up and down between earth and sky, delighted to tamper with danger; or if the branch beneath her broke, save herself, monkey-like, by an agile spring and catch at the nearest bough. Thus the keen perceptive faculties of the child were only employed in perfecting her animal strength and agility. And Sophie? had Sophie quite abandoned her? No; but occupied with her unhappy and exacting husband, and with her younger and more helpless niece, Sophie seeing Hagar always well, left her very much to herself. And indeed the wild child was always rather beyond the control of her gentle relatives. Thus passed the winter.

The close intimacy that had subsisted between the little families of Heath Hall and Grove Cottage, had been considerably interrupted since the marriage of Sophie. She wished to preserve the secret of her husband, and therefore rather discouraged the continuance of the hitherto almost daily intercourse between the families. Emily also felt an aversion to the minister that had an influence in severing the close intimacy of the friends. And Augustus, too, being in daily attendance upon a school three miles in the opposite direction, found little chance to visit his old playmate Hagar. Emily, however, though her visits were few and far between, still felt in all its devotion her warm affection for Sophie. Other neighbors, mere acquaintances, came occasionally to the Hall, and sometimes spent a day there, or a day and night after the manner of country neighborhood visiting, but from these careless and uninterested observers Sophie succeeded in keeping her misfortune secret. The two children were objects of considerable attention from these visitors, and the striking contrast of their persons, manners, and characters, noted and commented upon, *in their presence*. The winning beauty and sweet confiding sociability of the fair cherub, and the wild shy reserve of the dark child, were compared, and sagely commented upon—and conclusions very disparaging to Hagar, drawn by these superficial critics who did not understand her. Indeed the contrast between these two children was so striking, that they were never passed by strangers or servants without some such remark as this—"Rosalia is beautiful, lovely—but that other child is *very* homely." It is very wrong to make remarks on the personal beauty or ugliness of children in their hearing. The effect is invariably injurious. It is highly reprehensible to draw *invidious comparisons* between the beauty of children, especially before their faces. This thoughtlessness is fraught with the direst consequences. When you say so carelessly in their presence, that "Anne is prettier than Jane," and look at Anne as though her accidental beauty were a virtue, and look at Jane as though she were in fault—think that into the fertile soil of the children's hearts you have dropped the seeds of evil—the seed of vanity in the heart of Anne, the seed of envy into that of Jane, and the germ of discord into both. Upon Rosalia and Hagar these thoughtless remarks were producing the worst effects. Rosalia, loved, petted and praised, by the family, the servants and visitors, with all her gentleness and sweetness, was growing vain, selfish, and sensual—and loved best of all things to lie in some old lady's soft lap and suck sugar-plums, while the said old lady caressed and praised her. And she was a most endearing child; unlike other spoiled and petted children, she never gave way to temper—she was much too gentle for that. She was penetrable, sensitive, not high spirited. Sometimes in his wilful moods Mr. Withers would repulse her, though never with the asperity with which he drove Hagar from his presence; and she would weep, and come back, and coax and caress him until the madman, subdued by the power of love, would take her to his bosom—where nestling herself cosily, she would fall into the deep sleep—the reaction of her excitement; while his own stormy soul, mesmerized, would subside into calmness. And daily his love for her and his aversion to Hagar increased. Upon Hagar, too, these influences were producing the worst effects. Jealousy and suspicion of the few she loved, scorn and contempt for the opinions of others—neglect of her person as little worth attention, and a morbid desire to be loved exclusively—

Digitized by Google

these were some of the evil fruits of her mal-education.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATTIC.

"An old joy of childhood and youth, a cat-like love of garrets."—EMERSON.

ONE more circumstance, patient reader, and I have done tiring you with the squabbles of children. It was one that more particularly introduced Hagar to the notice of Mrs. May, and saved her from degenerating quite into a savage. It occurred some time after the events recorded in the last chapter. But just let me briefly sum up the history of the intervening time. The disease of Mr. Withers had changed in these respects—he was no longer subject to violent outbreaks; but his malady, wanting that vent, had only deepened into gloom and moroseness. He had lost his eloquence and power in the pulpit to that degree, that a curate had to be appointed to assist him, and his pay deducted from the minister's small salary. This curate boarded with Emily. The farm, only partly reclaimed, had been suffered to relapse into desolation. The income arising from Sophie's school had been, of course, cut off at its discontinuance; and the family at Heath Hall found themselves in straitened circumstances. This was felt more heavily, as the continued exactions of Mr. Withers upon the time and attention of his gentle and complying wife, left her little opportunity for those economies and contrivances by which a thrifty housekeeper makes the most of a narrow income. Raymond had not once visited the Hall, though he frequently wrote. Emily May, repulsed by what she supposed the coldness of Sophie, altogether absented herself.

Gusty was absent on a voyage with his uncle, Lieutenant Wilde, who had made one visit to Grove Cottage, but without calling upon or even inquiring after Sophie.

It was just before the expected return of Gusty, near the close of the winter, when Hagar was driven in from her rambles by the arising of a furious storm. She betook herself to the garret, her place of refuge in times of trouble. Poor little Rose, repulsed by the gloom and ill-temper of "uncle," had already hidden herself there; and the children sat before the fireless hearth—the desolate children in the desolate scene. It was a large, low, square room, with two deep dormer windows facing the east, and looking far out upon the bay—with a dark cuddie under the eaves of the western wall—with a rude fireplace on the south, and opposite on the north, the door leading from the room into the narrow passage and down the stairs. The walls were very dark, and the plastering broken here and there. Between the two dormer windows, and close to the floor, was a large crevice in the wall, through which you might look into the long dark space between the wall and the edge of the roof, a space corresponding to the cuddie on the opposite side. Strange sounds were sometimes heard in this place, and through the crevice. Hagar, that child of shadows, would look with mysterious awe—for with its boundaries lost in obscurity, to her it seemed a dark profound sinking through the house down to the centre of the earth, while her imagination loved to people it with ghosts, gnomes, and all the subterranean demons she had read of in her favorite book, the Arabian Nights. "Listen! listen to the spirits," she would sometimes whisper in wantonness to her little cousin.

"I hear nothing but the rats in the cuddie," would the matter of fact Rose reply. The floor of the attic was bare, the planks rude and rough, and worn apart in some places, leaving dark apertures, down which Hagar would look as into an interminable abyss, the haunt of her favorite gnomes. There was no furniture in this room except an old trunk without a top, that sometimes served Rosalia for a baby-house, and sometimes reversed, for a seat. Upon this trunk the children were now seated. The storm still raged around the old house-top—the shingles were reft off, whirled aloft, and sent clattering like hail-stones, to the ground; the wind howled and shrieked about the walls, and the old windows and rafters writhed and groaned in the blast, like the wail of lost souls, and the laugh of exultant fiends. The rain was dashed in floods against the crazy windows, and the children sprinkled through their crevices. The water began to stream from the leakages in the ceiling, and to collect in puddles in the corners of the room. These puddles enlarging and approaching each other, threatened to overflow the floor. The children drew their trunk upon the fireless hearth. Rose's little chubby arms and legs were red with cold.

"Oh! how the wind's a-blowing. I am almost frozen," wept Rose. And they were. Let's go into the parlor," suggested Rose.

Hagar looked at her with astonishment, that she should propose to "beard the lion" in his present mood.

"Yes, into the parlor," persisted the child. "I'll bet you anything that uncle will let us stay in the parlor this evening, and warm ourselves at the fire; it is so very cold, you know."

"Well! it is *my* house, anyhow, and so for your sake, Rose, we *will* go down."

And hand in hand the shivering children left the attic, passed down four flights of back stairs, and went to the parlor door, and Rosalia peeped timidly in. It was the same old parlor, papered with the christian martyrs that I have before described; and there sat the tall thin figure of Mr. Withers, dark, solemn, and lowering; and opposite sat Sophie, with her soft brown eyes bent over her knitting. And, oh! sight of luxury to the half-frozen child,—there was a glorious, glowing hickory fire, crackling, blazing, and roaring in the chimney. The children opened the door and passed in, carefully closing it after them; they approached the fire, Hagar with an air of defiance, Rose with a look of deprecation. Sophie looked at the children with remorseful tenderness, and made room for them, unluckily, between herself and Withers, thereby attracting his attention. He turned, and knitting his brows until they met across his nose, and fixing his eyes sternly on the children, he asked, in a rough tone—

Digitized by Google

"What are you doing here?"

"Warming ourselves!" exclaimed Hagar, raising her eyes, flashing, to his face.

He frowned darkly on her, and half started from his seat, while Rose cowered at her side, and Sophie grew pale.

"Be off with yourselves," he said, in a stern under tone.

Hagar planted her feet firmly on the ground, while Rosalia slunk away. Sophie arose, and saying, in a low tone, "Take Rose to the kitchen fire, dear Hagar," prepared to follow them.

"Come back, Sophie!" exclaimed Withers, in an excited tone. And she sat down with a patient, despairing look, merely motioning to Hagar by an imploring gesture, to leave the room.

"Well! let's go into the kitchen and warm ourselves at Aunt Cumbo's fire," suggested the ever hopeful Rosalia.

They left the parlor by a back door that led through a sort of closet into the kitchen. The storm was still raging, but a good fire was burning on the kitchen hearth, and the tea-kettle was singing over the blaze, and old Cumbo was standing at a table kneading dough.

"Are you going to have biscuits for supper, Aunt Cumbo?" asked Rosalia, in a coaxing tone, as she approached the table.

"Now, what you comin' out here botherin' arter me for, when I am gettin' supper—go 'long in de house wid you."

The old woman happened to be in a bad humor.

"But, Aunt Cumbo, we are cold—we want to warm ourselves," coaxed Rose. "Mayn't we warm ourselves by your fire?"

"No, no, no! kitchen ain't no place for white children, no how you can fix it, so go 'long in wid you." And the rough old woman came bustling up to the fireplace, drove the little girls away, and began to set her spider and spider lid to heat.

"No; this *is* no place for us," said Hagar, who disdained a controversy with a menial; and the children left the passage.

Rosalia's teeth were chattering, and she felt as though the cold had reached her heart.

"I wish that we were both dead, Hagar," said she, in a whimpering tone.

"I don't," said Hagar, looking half in pity, half in scorn, at the wailing child. "Nor must you. You must live. You are to marry the President of the United States, you know."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the vain child, suddenly brightening up, "so I am! Cumbo, when she aint cross, says I'm pretty enough to marry him or his betters! And then, Hagar! oh, Hagar! then I am going to have a good fire all the time, in every room in the house; and I will wear *whole* shoes and stockings *every* day, and *always* have biscuits for supper. And—never mind, Hagar, you shall live with me, too; and when I think of that, oh, Hagar! When I think of that, I have such a—such a—what do you call it, that keeps people up, and keeps 'em alive?"

"Hope."

"Yes! 'never give up.' You know Gusty Wilde says 'never give up,' and I am agoing to 'never give up.' I am going down into the cellar, now, to pick up chips. Tarquins has been down there sawing wood, and I know there must be chips there; and we can pick up enough to make us a fire, and we can make a nice fire and tell stories."

And with the elasticity of childhood she led the way down to the cellar. It was a large, dark, musty old place, with an area partitioned off, in which milk, butter, fresh meat, &c., were kept in summer; in winter it was usually two feet deep in water; now, however, it was nearly dry. It was originally intended for a kitchen, and was built in the old-fashioned English style, with a large grate in the fireplace, with ovens each side, having heavy iron doors. These deep ovens, the bounds of which were out of sight in the darkness, seemed to Hagar like the entrances to subterranean caverns, the abode of ghosts. To Rose they were merely brick closets, that smelt very musty and unpleasant. The brick pavement of the cellar was decayed away, and green with mould. It was, however, a favorite resort with the children, for there they were free from persecution. They entered, and Rosalia began to fill her apron with chips, when Hagar spied an old worn-out flag basket, and drew it towards them. They both went to work, and soon filled the little basket, and Rosalia, taking it up in her chubby arms, began to toil up stairs with it. Hagar would have taken it from—but "No, Hagar," said she, "I am afraid to go into the kitchen again. I'll carry this, and *you* go and steal a coal of fire, and bring the broom, so that we can sweep up the slop."

Hagar went into the kitchen, which she found vacant. Cumbo had gone to the spring. Taking a coal of fire in the tongs, and seizing the broom, she fled up stairs into the attic, where little Rose was already busied in clearing the damp rubbish from the fire-place. She received the coal from Hagar, and kneeling down, placed it on the hearth, collected around it the smallest chips, and blew it. A little blaze soon flickered on the hearth. She continued to add more chips as the weak flame would bear it. In the meantime Hagar had swept up the room. The storm had subsided. The little fire was burning cheeringly. The children drew the old trunk before it, and sat down, their arms around each other's waist; their little toes stretched out to the fire; their countenances wearing that satisfied consciousness of having toiled for and won the comforts they were enjoying. And after all, it was but a little fire in a dreary old attic. They were not permitted to enjoy this long. Steps were heard approaching their retreat. The door opened, and Tar, or as he called himself, Tarquinius Superbus—the colored boy of all work—entered. Rose ran to her basket of chips, and placed herself before it.

"What you-dem do wid dat broom you stole from de kitchen, you little t'ieves, you? Nex' time you gim me trouble for come up here arter you dem's nonsense, I tell Mrs. Widders, an' ef dat don't do I tell *Mr.* Widders—*you* see!"

With that he espied the broom, and in going around to take it, his eyes fell upon the little fire, and the small basket of chips. Poor Rose looked guilty and dismayed, but held desperately on to her property. Hagar watched him with a steady eye.

"My good gracious 'live—did any *soul* ever see de like? What *will* Mr. Widders say?

Digitized by Google

A-wastin' all de wood! Here's chips enough to kindle all de fires in de mornin'."

And with a perspective glance at his morning's work, when the basket of chips would be very convenient, the rude boy stooped down to take possession of the prize. Rosalia held tight her treasure. He jerked it from her, and in doing so, tore her little tender arms with the rough flags of the old basket. Having lost his temper in the struggle, the boy then went to the chimney, and taking the tongs, scattered the blazing chips, and raking the damp rubbish from the corners, extinguished the fire. Then with his prize he marched out of the room. Rose was sobbing and wiping the blood from her wounded arm. Hagar was still and silent, but the fire was kindling in her dark eyes; her gipsy blood was rising; at last she started after him, overtook him half way down the stairs, and seized the basket; he pulled it from her hold and fled, she pursuing him into the kitchen. To end the matter, he went up to the chimney, turned up the basket, and shook down the chips into the fire. Her gipsy blood was up! She ran to him as he was stooping over his work of wanton cruelty, and giving him a sudden push, sent him into the fire. The basket was crushed under his hands, and saved them from being badly burnt. He struggled, recovered himself, and arose. Just at this moment Cumbo re-entered the kitchen, and Rosalia, who had followed her cousin, came in.

"What's de matter now?" inquired the old woman.

Hagar was too proud and Rosalia too frightened to speak.

Tar gave an exaggerated account of the whole affair, as he brushed the smut and ashes from his sleeves. He dwelt particularly on the *waste* with which "de childer had burned up all de light wood for kindlin'."

Cumbo turned up the whites of her eyes in horror at the depredation.

"It was only a few little chips that we picked up, and they were damp; and see how he scratched my arms!" said Rosalia, holding them up to view.

Cumbo having sent in supper, felt herself in a better humor; and thought herself prepared to render judgment with marvellous impartiality and wisdom, which, seating herself, and resting her hands on her knees, she did to the following effect:

"Tarquinus Perbus, you go right in house an' wait on table. Massa Widders, he callin' for you. An' Rose, you putty little angel, you come here an' sit on old mammy's lap, and toast your poor little footy toes before dis nice fire; mammy's got a warm biscuit for you in her bosom, too. An' Hagar, you ugly, bad ting, go long right trait out dis here kitchen wid yourself. You're so bad I can't a-bear you—but ugly people always *is* bad."

Now, if she had said bad people always are ugly, she might have come nearer the truth, or at least taught a better lesson.

"I did not make myself, God made me," said Hagar.

"He didn't! he never made anything half so ugly and bad! De debil made you. *He* made my beautiful, lovely, good little Rose. Some ob dese days she shall be de Presiden's wife, and *you*—you shall be her waitin' maid, cause nobody's ever gwine to marry *you*—you're too ugly and hateful. Go long traight out dis here kitchen now, I don't want nuffin 'tall to do wid you."

Hagar left the kitchen, casting back a look of inquiry at Rosalia; but the little girl was petted, coaxed, flattered, and tempted by the warm fire, and the prospect of the nice biscuit, and preferred to keep her seat.

Hagar took her lonely way up the four flights of stairs that led to the attic. Arrived there she sat down moodily upon the trunk, resting her elbows upon her knees, and holding her thin face between the palms of her hands; her black elf locks were hanging wildly about her shoulders, and her eyes were wide open, and fixed upon the floor in a stare. She was bitterly reflecting that with a really kind-hearted aunt she was suffering all the evils of orphanage, abused by menials, pinched with hunger, and half frozen with cold. She was wondering, too, how it was that the good God had made her so ugly that she could not be loved, and therefore could not be good. Poor child, she never dreamed of general admiration, she only wished to be loved; and she had no one to tell her that the beauty which wins permanent affection is the beauty of goodness; that goodness will soften the hardest, and intellect light up the dullest features; that though physical beauty may excite passion, and intellect attract admiration, only goodness can win everlasting love. Within the last few months, such scenes as I have described were constantly occurring, and their evil influence fell on all the children's after life. Some of the most serious defects in their characters, some of the most deplorable errors in their conduct, and the most dreadful misfortune of their lives, might be traced back to the injudicious, careless remarks of visitors, and the capricious blame or praise of servants, to whose care or neglect they were so much left. When I recollect the strong and decided bias given in childhood to my own character by people and circumstances over which I had no sort of control, and against whose evil influence I could make no sort of resistance; when I suffer by the effect of impressions received in infancy, which neither time, reason, nor religion have been able to efface—which only sorrow could impair by bruising the tablet; knowing as I know the tender impressibility of infancy, feeling as I feel the indelibility of such impressions, I tremble for the unseen influences that may surround my own young children—aye, even for the chance word dropped by stranger lips, and heard by infant ears; for that word may be a fruitful seed that shall spring up into a healthful vine, or a upas tree, twenty years after it is sown. Infancy is a fair page upon which you may write—goodness, happiness, heaven, or—sin, misery, hell. And the words once written, no chemical art can erase them. The substance of the paper itself must be rubbed through by the file of suffering before the writing can be effaced. Infancy is the soft metal in the moulder's hands; he may shape it in the image of a fiend, or the form of an angel—and when finished, the statue hardens into rock, which nothing but the hammer of God's providence can break; nothing but the fire of God's providence can melt for re-moulding.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

GUSTY.

'Thine was the shout! the song! the burst of joy!
Which sweet from childhood's rosy lips resoundeth,
Thine was the eager spirit naught could cloy,
And the glad heart from which all grief reboundeth."
MRS. NORTON

THERE she sat motionless. The only sounds were the beating of the rain against the windows, and the racing of the rats through the cuddies. At last the noise of footsteps tearing up the stairs, and a voice shouting a sea-song startled the wild girl—she looked up just as Gusty Wilde burst into the room, and running up to her, caught her around the neck, and gave her a boisterous salute, exclaiming breathlessly,

"I just got home last night, Hagar! and have been wanting to run over and see you so much, but mother detained me this morning, and I couldn't, but you see as soon as the storm subsided a little I ran over here, 'specially as mother gives me a tea-party this evening in honor of my coming home. She has baked a plum cake, and I have brought you home a monkey; so, Hagar, you must return with me. I came on purpose to fetch you; *you* won't be afraid to cross the swollen river."

He was a fine, noble looking boy, stoutly built, with a full face, rosy complexion, clear merry blue eyes, and an abundance of soft yellow curls clustering thick around a brow of almost feminine whiteness. He wore a sailor's blue jacket, white trowsers, and tarpaulin hat. He looked at Hagar for her answer. Observing now for the first time the girl's disconsolate air, he sat down beside her, pulled off his tarpaulin hat, and placing it between his knees, put his arm quietly around the neck of the child, and kissing her dark brow gently, inquired,

"Hagar, what is the matter?"

She did not reply, but remained in her first posture with her elbows on her knees, her chin propped up by her hands, and her black elf locks streaming down each side of her face. He gently put her hair back from her face, and tucking it behind her ears, asked kindly,

"Where is Rosalia, Hagar, and why are you up here in this cold, damp room alone?"

"How did you know that I was here?"

"I met Tarquinius in the entry as I came in the house, and inquiring for you the first one, he told me you were here—then I ran in, upset Father Withers in my haste, kissed Sophie, and breaking away ran up here to find you. But where is Rosalia? I expected to find her with you?"

"Rosalia is in old Cumbo's lap warming herself before the kitchen fire, and eating biscuits—and I—am I not always alone—when storms and floods drive me to the house; but *they*," added she, "shall not send me in again; the wild beasts bear their raging, and so will I."

"Why don't you stay in the parlor?"

"In the parlor?" laughed the girl, bitterly; "Mr. Withers's mastiffs and bulldogs stay in the parlor, the old tabby cat reposes on the rug before the parlor fire, and Aunt Sophie's pet rabbit has its cushion in the corner, but I, I am a parlor ornament, aint I?"

"Oh! Hagar, don't do so! it is so very ugly in a little girl to act that way, laughing and jibing and jeering with so much scorn and bitterness. Now tell me why you are banished from the parlor, if you *are* banished."

"Look at me! this is the best suit of clothes I have in the world; do you think Mr. Withers is going to let me stay in the parlor looking like *this*, strict as *he* is?"

Gusty glanced down at her torn and rusty calico dress—and at her, and at her little feet protruding through her old stockings and shoes. Then he said seriously, as he looked at her,

"Lord, Hagar, I don't know now how I shall take you in that trim. But why, child, did you not stay at the kitchen fire with Rose? That would have been far more comfortable than this wet, cold garret."

"I was driven from the kitchen, Gusty—driven from the kitchen because I paid Tarquin well for hurting Rosalia—and only think, Gusty, *just* think, Rosalia, who should have stuck to me, remained with the old woman who drove me off for protecting *her*," and the girl turned her eyes flashing with scorn and bitterness towards the boy, who remarked—

"Rose did that, Hagar? It was not like Rose to do that. I shall not love Rose if she becomes mean and selfish; but it can't be so; something remains to be explained."

"Oh, yes," laughed the wild child, "something remains to be explained—she was hungry and cold—and Cumbo offered to feed and warm her."

How unusual and how frightful is a sneer on a child's countenance, and oh! what a tale of perverted nature it tells! After a while her countenance relapsed into its serious cast, and she said,

"Since you left, Gusty, I have been quite alone; everybody has fallen away from me and gone to Rosalia. Every one dislikes or forgets me, and every one loves Rosalia."

"I have not fallen away from you, Hagar."

"No dear Gusty, *you* have not—perhaps you *will*, though, when you see more of Rose—" added she, sadly and doubtingly.

There was springing in her bosom the germ of that doubt of all things and all persons that in after life became a distinguishing and fatal trait in her character. Children are born with trust. The confidingness of childhood is proverbial, but like all other childish instincts, it is young and delicate, and easily crushed to death. Children *feel* before they can *reason*, and the impressions of childhood being well nigh ineffaceable, the deceived and betrayed child is often parent to the sceptical and scoffing man or woman.

"I will *never* fall away from you, Hagar, nor can I see how Rosalia can draw me away. Can't I love you *both*? And now, little Hagar, you must let me comb your hair and take you over to mother's to tea. I should like to take Rose, too, but she is too tender to brave the weather this evening."

And in all simplicity he took from his pocket a little comb, and began to comb out Hagar's elf-locks. With wondrous skill he smoothed and arranged her long hair into a simple knot behind her head, and passing his hands two or three times over the surface of her hair, said cheerfully,

Digitized by Google

"There, now, you little thing, why don't you take pains with yourself? You look so much prettier, now that your hair is shining like blue-black satin, so that I can see my face in it. And, oh, Hagar! how I wish that they would let you come and live with my mother; mother wants a little girl so much, especially if I get my mid-shipman's warrant and go to sea again. Oh, if you were only with mother, how good and happy she would make you—and you would grow pretty, too, for good girls always grow pretty. There, you are smiling! do you happen to know that you have the most beautiful smile in the world, Hagar?"

"I know that Rosalia has, for everybody says so."

"Yes, Rose has a sweet, soft smile, like summer sunbeams on flowers; pretty enough, and common enough; but *your* smile, Hagar—I'll tell you what your smile is like. I have been at sea, near a wild coast full of frightful breakers, shelving rocks, dark cliffs, and murky caverns, with a stormy sea, a blackened sky, the whole landscape dark, gloomy, and terrible, until suddenly out breaks the sun, lighting up the scene which then becomes wild, grand, sublime! Such is your face, and such your smile, Hagar. I gaze breathless at the wild beauty of both."

Just at this moment, into the room broke Rosalia, and running up to Hagar threw her arms about her neck, exclaiming, breathlessly, while she thrust a biscuit into her hands,

"Here, here, Hagar! I only just waited till she gave me the biscuit she promised, and then I came away and brought it to you! Here, here, take it, Hagar! I ain't hungry—no, not a bit."

Thus would the sweet child's native goodness sometimes break through the shell of selfishness that was crusting over it. Hagar, with one of her quick revulsions of feeling, burst into tears, and pressed the little one to her bosom, and Gusty, snatching her up in his arms, gleefully exclaimed while he ran around the room with her,

"There, there, there! Hurrah! I knew it. I could have sworn my soul away upon the soundness of my little Rosebud! I knew there was not a really selfish drop of blood in little Rose's tender heart!"

Then returning and setting her down, he said, "Come, the rain has quite ceased, the sun is setting in golden glory, mother's cake is done, and her tea is ready, and she is waiting for me, I know. Come, Rose shall go, too. I will carry her in my arms. And Hagar, you little savage, you can trip on before, and when I have got you both safe at the cottage, I can send word to Sophie, and keep you all night." So saying he led the children from the attic.

Emily May was seated in the sober glory of her neat parlor, awaiting the return of Gusty. The round tea table was covered with a white damask cloth, and graced by a little silver tea service. The plum-cake stood in the centre. It was with surprise and pain that she received the children. Ignorant of the cause of Sophie's neglect of them, she blamed her in her heart for it, and determined upon the next day to ride over, and use an old friend's privilege of speaking to her upon the subject. The next day that visit was made, and Emily saw the wasted, sorrowing, patient look of her friend, the truth was partly guessed, and she proposed to take the children, and especially Hagar, under her own surveillance. To this proposition, Sophie tearfully and gratefully acceded. Encouraged by having gained this point, and incited by her love of children, she went a step further and proposed that both the children should be sent to the cottage as pupils, and share with Gusty the instructions of the young curate, her boarder. This plan was submitted to the decision of Mr. Withers, and having received his acquiescence, was immediately carried into effect. Soon the most favorable change was apparent in the children. Rosalia's beauty bloomed like her type, the rose, refreshed by showers and sunbeams. Hagar's black hair no longer hung rusty with exposure, in tangled elf locks over her shoulders, but was banded in satin-like folds. Their characters also seemed to undergo modification. Hagar retained all her individuality, her brave, free, wild spirit, her rather amazonian tastes, but lost the harshness and bitterness that made no part of it. Rosalia retained all her delicacy, her tenderness, yes, and sensuality, but lost the selfishness not native to her gentle character, or at least these things *seemed* so. The evils growing in the children's hearts were *cut down;* whether they were *uprooted* or not is doubtful. Seeds of evil once taking root in children's hearts are almost ineradicable. Years pass away.

There are times when the current of existence frets and boils along the rocky channel of anxiety, among the rugged crags of care, grief, and wrong; there are times when it dashes thundering over the precipice of some awful crime or calamity—times when it stagnates in the fœtid marshes of indolence and despair—times when it winds on between the verdant banks of peace and amid the blooming isles of pleasure—and times when, scarce marked by ragged crag or verdant isle, it flows on without joy or sorrow, straight towards the ocean of eternity. Even thus calmly flowed the life-stream of Sophie. Relieved from gnawing anxiety upon the children's account, she was able to give a more cheerful attention to her husband, and soon the more happy effects were apparent. The gloom into which he had fallen was dissipated by the sunshine of her smiles. She now became conscious of a calm, pure, and holy affection for him, such as angels may be supposed to feel for sorrowing man—such as we feel for objects we have nursed and cherished. This sentiment deepened into tenderness as she saw—what she could not fail to see—that as the rays of intellect emanated clearer and clearer from his brain, they but served to reveal the blackness of the shadow of death gathering thick and thicker around him. And it was beautiful yet sorrowful to see how as the sun of reason shone forth, all those clouds and fogs of selfishness and suspicion vanished from his mind. This is not strange or even unusual in the history of mental disease. It is a well

Digitized by Google

known fact that insanity frequently entirely reverses the natural character; thus, under its influence the disinterested grow selfish and exacting, while the selfish become generous, the timid bold, and the bold timid, and most frequently the gentle and sensitive grow harsh and violent. His gloom softened into sadness, into seriousness, into resignation, which soon brightened into gentle cheerfulness, which but one thing in the world could ruffle, the sight of Rosalia Aguilar; then indeed the tide of memory, laden with bitterness, would flow over his soul filling it with sorrow. Upon this account Rosalia became a permanent inmate of Grove Cottage; while Hagar, no longer repulsed by the caprices of his disease, became his most assiduous, and next to Sophie his best beloved nurse and companion. Thus they "brightened the links of love, of sympathy;" *and this returning confidence and affection of her uncle, gave Hagar the antidote for the poison of her soul.* Thenceforth in Hagar's vision "anger, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," were greater or less degrees of moral insanity.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOOR.

"—October, heaven's delicious breath,
When woods begin to wear the crimson leaf,
And suns grow meek, and the meek sun grows brief,
And the year smiles as drawing near its death."

BRYANT.

It was near the close of a day late in the month of October. The level rays of the setting sun glanced across the green waters of the bay, tinting their rippling waves with emerald and jet—across the brown waste of the heath, mottling its rugged surface with gold and bronze upon the decayed edifice of the old Hall, painting its rusty walls in strongly contrasted colors of red and black, while its tall windows flashed back in lines of shining light the dazzling beams—and upon the distant forest whose variegated foliage reflected in topaz and in ruby light the day's declining glory. It was a still, refulgent scene, the good-night smile of nature. Presently the still life of the landscape was enlivened by two equestrian figures, descending the slope of the heath from the Hall, while their shadows stretched lengthening behind them over the dry and burnished turf. The figure on the right hand side was that of a youth of some eighteen years, clad in the undress uniform of a midshipman—whom on near view we recognise as our old acquaintance, Gusty Wilde May. By his side rode a beautiful girl of about fourteen years of age, in a graceful riding habit of blue cloth. She was rather full formed, very fair, with deep blue eyes, and wavy hair of pale gold floating about a forehead of transparent whiteness, with a soft, gentle manner, and a pleading air in the curve of her rosy lips and the downward sweep of her snowy eyelids.

The youth and the maiden each rode a bay horse. They—the youth and maiden—not the bay horses—were conversing in a low tone as they ambled over the heath—

"And this is all that has occurred during my long absence of three years."

"All, Augustus."

"Rosalia, what do you suppose were my emotions as I sailed down the bay this morning towards Churchill-Point?"

"Oh, I suppose your heart was full of happiness!"

"No—every mile added more anxiety to the weight oppressing my heart as I drew near home, reflecting on the many and dreadful changes that might have passed over those I loved in these long three years, and *now* I am happy, for, thank God," said he, raising his cap reverently, "nothing but agreeable changes have passed over Grove Cottage and its inmates. I find you the sweetest little turtle-dove that ever folded its wings in a nest, domesticated with my mother, and forming a large portion of her happiness. I find my dear mother at thirty-five looking young and fresh as Hebe—and about—I am very much inclined to think—*tell* me, Rosalia, *is* my mother going to be married to Mr. Buncomb?"

"I think so, Augustus—does that disturb you?"

"Yes, Rosalia, it disturbs me—with *joy!* Dear mother—how devoted she has been to us, Rosalia! And now that we are all grown up, and do not need her constant care, and now that it may naturally be expected that before long we will all be getting mar—— be getting separate establishments of *our own*—I am glad that there is no prospect of mother's spending her life *alone*. And then to see how long the curate has waited for her! Ever since the first winter of his boarding with her while we were his pupils—now that is what I call genuine affection—very few men would have done that!"

"Well, but, Gusty, he *boarded* with her all the time—he had her society all the time—so what odds?"

"True—I do suppose that was the secret of his patience. And now, Hagar, this singular girl, where are we to find her?"

"She is out on the moor somewhere, with horse and hounds—she has been out all day."

Just as they spoke the sunset rays were intercepted by another equestrian figure. The slight, elegant figure of a dark complexioned young girl clad in a dark green riding habit, cap and plume, mounted on a jet black courser, came pricking over the heath, followed by a couple of beautiful pointers. In her hand she held a light fowling-piece, and at her saddle's pommel hung a game bag filled with birds. As her falcon eye descried the youth and maiden, she bounded forward to meet them—she was at their side—and "Hagar!" "Gusty!" were the joyful words of recognition that simultaneously broke from their lips, as their horses nearly met in a shock, and he bent from his saddle, caught her to his bosom, and gave her a hearty kiss. It was a brother's greeting to the sister of his babyhood. And—"How you have grown, Hagar!" "How tall you are, Gusty!" were the next words of surprise and pleasure that broke from their lips as they backed their horses and gazed at each other delightedly—"What a sportsman you are, Hagar!" "When did you come, Gusty?" were the next cross-question and remark spoken in the same breath by both

Digitized by Google

"I came scarcely an hour ago," answered Augustus.

"And you have been to the Hall?"

"Yes, Rosalia and myself rode over to the Hall to see you—hearing that you were out, and we being impatient, could not await you there, so we rode out in search of you—but what a sportsman you are, Hagar! have you bagged anything? or only scared the birds and shot yourself?"

"Enough for your supper, Master Gusty—and I guess that it will not be unwelcome—I rather think it is some time since you have enjoyed the luxury of a canvas-back duck!" said the girl, with a dash of pique in her tone. Then raising her eagle eye to the sky, she quickly touched Gusty, and pointing immediately over head, exclaimed, "Quick, Gusty! look! do you see that speck—like a speck of ink in the dark blue zenith?"

"Why, no! Who could see a speck in the zenith of such a dark sky as this—none but you, Hagar, whose gaze would make the sun bat his eyes!"

She raised her fowling-piece, took aim, fired, and in another instant a rush and whirr of wings swooped down through the air, and a white pigeon, the hapless laggard, or perhaps the pioneer of some flock, dropped bleeding at their feet.

"Admirable!" exclaimed Augustus.

The wild girl's dark eyes flashed under their long lashes, and her white teeth gleamed between her smiling lips as she noticed his surprise. But Rosalia gazed in tearful sorrow at the wounded and fluttering bird—and—

"Poor, poor thing!" she said, "it was going home, thinking of no harm or danger!" and her tears fell mingling with and diluting the blood that crimsoned the white feathers of its bosom.

"Ah! it was cruel in Hagar to kill the pigeon, wasn't it?" inquired Gusty, derisively, relapsing into boyish rudeness.

"No! I do not say it was cruel *in* Hagar because she didn't stop to think; but it was cruel *to* the bird, poor, dear thing! Can't you do anything for it, Gusty?"

Now this was asked so naively through her tears, that Gusty, rude hobble-de-hoy, burst into a loud laugh, and at its end assumed gravity and answered,—

"Yes, we can send for a surgeon!"

Rosalia alighted cautiously from her horse, and kneeling down on the turf gazed mournfully at the glazing eyes of the bird—it fluttered violently once or twice, and then grew still. She burst into tears and sobbed convulsively.

"Why, Rose!" "Why, what a baby!" exclaimed Hagar and Augustus in the same breath.

"Oh! but, poor thing, what harm had it done? It was sailing so blithely through the sky, and now it is quite dead—not even gone to Heaven, where I wish it could go. I am sorry for you, too, Hagar, for I know you feel so bad about shooting the poor bird, now that it is done." And suffering herself to be lifted into her saddle by Gusty, who had alighted for the purpose, she ambled up to the side of Hagar and held out her hand—"I know you are sorry, Hagar! are you not?"

The face of the dark girl was sparkling with mirth.

"No, my little white dove," she answered, "not at all; and as for your bird, though its spirit is not probably yet in Heaven, it may be on its way there!"

"What is that you say, Hagar?" queried Gusty.

Hagar reined up her horse, and stooping, lifted the dead bird; she asked—

"Where is the spirit, the life that animated this bird, Gusty?"

"Why, *dead*, of course."

"Pooh! *this* that I hold in my hand is dead, but the life—the life—where is that?"

"Gone, of course, gone; where else should it be?"

"'Gone'—*where?*"

"Where?—why, where?—why, gone—*away.*"

"Thank you! perfectly satisfactory," said Hagar, and her wild eyes flashed, and her white teeth gleamed with suppressed mirth.

"Tell me—tell me, Hagar!" said little Rosalia, "do you think, *sure enough*, that birds *do* go to Heaven? Sometimes *I* think so, too; they are so beautiful and good, you know! But then the Holy Bible says,—'The beasts that perish,' therefore, of course, they must perish."

"Your first expressed thought may be not unscriptural, little angel—the *beasts* perish; their *forms* perish; but their *life*, through other transmigrations, may reach Heaven in the *human* form!"

"Why, that is the old doctrine of transmigration of souls," said Gusty.

"Not exactly, or rather, it is *more* than that; for instance, I think that life continually *ascends*, never *descends*. It looks to me very stupid to suppose that a soul can *relapse* into the form of a beast. No, life is never *lost*, but it continually *changes its locality*, always *ascending;* the various forms of life being the steps by which it reaches humanity—then Heaven. I have lived so much in the wildest solitudes of nature; I have seen so much *more*, so much *stronger* life-spirit *below*, than on a *level* with humanity; I have felt it struggling up, through water, stones, and clay; through lichen, herb, and tree; through insects, birds, and beasts; up to its highest visible form, humanity; and I have grown to *dream* that life-spirit is elaborated from matter; or if not so, that in the union of spirit with matter, spirit may be first incarnated in the lowest form of matter, and passing through its various stages rise to human, to angelic nature. I believe there is one life-God, and many lives; the souls created in His image—that these souls might not each have been created at a *word*, in a *moment*—but created, or elaborated through *long ages*. I believe that each soul retains its separate existence, its separate features, its individual self, unmixed as undivided through all its incarnations; for instance the spirit of a rose in ascending the scale of being will never enter the form of an eagle, or a lion. To illustrate nearer home—here is my gentle Rosalia, whose pure spirit, ages ago, might have slept in the pale light of a seed pearl; then, in the lapse of centuries, lived in the fragrance of the wood violet; then, through many transmigrations, reached the form of the dove, then a lamb, and lastly, is incarnated in the beautiful child before us."

Digitized by Google

"Then, if that were so, why can I not remember when I was a violet, and when I was a dove?" pertinently inquired Rosalia.

"You cannot even recollect when you were an *infant*, little one—you cannot recollect all that happened last year, or last month; how should you be able to look back through a vista of past lives that the doors of many deaths have closed behind you. Perhaps at the close of your present life the whole vista may be thrown open, and you may be able to look back to the beginning. Oh, Rosalia! I remember that in the earliest years of conscious human existence, in infancy, my mind struggled as much backward for recollection, as forward for new knowledge." She was silent awhile, and then pursuing the train of thought, she said,—"The analogy between material and spiritual nature seems to me to be perfect in all its particulars. I never saw a human being who had not his type in the minerals, in the vegetables, in the insects, in the birds, and in the beasts."

"What is my type in each?" asked Augustus.

Hagar laughed as she replied,

"You, Gusty, are so much modified by education—the widow's petted child—that the stamp is nearly effaced, or at least smeared over; however, I can fancy you ascending the scale of being by these steps: mineral, bloodstone; vegetable, mustard; bird, the turkey; animal, the mastiff. There is, with all your strength, spirit, and courage, so much homeliness, domesticity about you, dear Gusty."

"And, Sophie, dearest Sophie, tell us all her incarnations."

"An agate—the sober-hued stone of which rosaries are made—then balm, so fragrant and refreshing in sickness, then the brown partridge, then the timid fawn, then *Sophie*."

"Good! that's like her—now yourself, Hagar."

"The ruby, pepper, the falcon, the tiger. But these are fancies."

They rode on towards the Hall.

"And oh!" said Hagar, "I tell you what character I admire—a spirit that has ascended through iron ore, oak, the elephant, into the form of some square-built, strong-minded, large-hearted, great-souled man!"

"Heaven send you such an one!" exclaimed Gusty, dismounting to assist them from their saddles at the gate of the Hall. A servant approached to take charge of the horses, and leaving them in his care, our little party entered the house. Sophie received them at the door and conducted them into the parlor.

It was just dusk, yet Mr. Withers, exhausted by illness, had retired to bed. It is years since we have seen Sophie, and she is somewhat changed—yet what her face had lost of infantile roundness and freshness, it had gained in intelligence and interest. She took her seat smilingly at the head of the tea-table and called the young people to seat themselves around her. When they were seated and served each with a cup of tea, she informed them that she had just written, at Mr. Withers's request, to recall Raymond to the Hall, from the Theological college at the North, the preparatory school of which had been for two years under his charge.

"And is it possible that he has never been at the Hall since he left it, the summer of your marriage, Mrs. Withers?"

"Never, Gusty. He remained at college until he took his degree, and then passed immediately into his present business."

"He was a great friend of Hagar's the little time he remained with you?"

"Yes," said Hagar, "*he* loved me, *he* never forgot or neglected me; even after he went away, in his letters to my aunt he always sent me a message until *I* learned to write, and we have corresponded ever since."

"And Rosalia has never seen him?"

"No," said Hagar. "Rose did not arrive until after he had left us, and, as we have just told you, he has never been here since."

"And Rose will not see him now," said Sophie, "for she leaves in one week for Boston for Mrs. Tresham's school."

"And when," inquired Gusty, "will Raymond be here?"

"Not sooner than two or three weeks."

"Then Rose will *not* see him?"

"No, and I shall be so sorry," said Rose.

After further desultory conversation, they finished tea and arose from the table. Rosalia and Augustus remained all night, and early the next morning departed for the Grove Cottage. All the next week was occupied by Emily May in preparations for Rosalia's departure, and, if it must out, in preparations for her own marriage with the Rev. Mr. Buncombe, the curate of the parish, the tutor of Hagar, Rosalia, and Gusty, and the boarder and suitor for many years of Emily May. It was for the purpose of getting her dear son's consent and presence that she had waited these last three years, and it was for the sake of gratifying her pet child, Rosalia, that she now determined that the marriage should take place before her departure to the North. Captain Wilde, whose ship now lay at Norfolk, had also been summoned to attend the wedding, and arrived in due season. Of course Mr. Withers and Sophie had been solicited, and were expected to attend. Upon the evening of the marriage day, however, as Rosalia was performing for Emily the affectionate service of dressing her for the ceremony, a note was handed the latter, which on being opened and read was found to be an apology from Sophie for non-attendance. "Mr. Withers," she said, "was very much worse, and required her constant care." If there was another motive for her absence it was not acknowledged to her own mind, scarcely recognised by her own heart.

* * * * * * *

The quiet wedding was over, the routine of the quiet cottage scarcely disturbed by its occurrence, and the quiet bride and bridegroom had returned, the one to his studies, the other to her household affairs, as though nothing had happened. Captain Wilde had returned to his ship, and the pleasant intercourse between the Hall and the cottage resumed. The last night before the departure of Rosalia was at hand, and at the earnest request of Sophie, Mr. and Mrs. Buncombe had agreed to bring her over and spend it at the Hall. Augustus May was also of the party. Rosalia's trunks had been packed and sent over early in the day, and in the afternoon the family from Grove Cottage rode over. It had been settled that Augustus May should

Digitized by Google

attend Rosalia to the North. The packet that was to convey them to Baltimore lay at anchor under the shadow of the promontory.

It was late in the afternoon when the carryall containing Mr. and Mrs. Buncombe, Rosalia, and Augustus, drew up before the gate of the Hall. Sophie met and conducted the party into the dining-room, where a feast had been prepared in honor of Rosalia's departure. Mr. Withers, pale and emaciated, and propped up in a chair, was also present. It was her last evening at the Hall for some time to come, and so they sat up late. Mr. Withers, from extreme fatigue, retired early, but it was midnight before the remaining members of the party were in bed. Morning dawned, breakfast was over, adieux were wept and kissed, and as the first ray of the rising sun gilded the waves of the bay, Augustus handed and followed Rosalia into the packet for Baltimore.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STORY OF FANNY RAYMOND.

"Have you seen but the bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o' the snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?"—BEN JONSON.

THE disease of Mr. Withers daily advanced—his health so rapidly declined that he became exceedingly anxious for the arrival of Raymond, who was now hourly expected.

"Well, Sophie, my gentle nurse," said he one day, as she sat by his bedside, "your probation is drawing to a close You have devoted yourself to me for eight long years, my guardian angel—to what purpose?"

"To what purpose?—you have done more good in this parish than any minister who has preceded you for many years; for even Mr. May, with all his excellences, lacked that eloquence—that power of persuasion—that profound knowledge of and potent sway over the human heart, that nothing but sorrow can lend to intellect. Hearts have been moved and elevated, minds aroused and inspired by your wisdom. A spirit has been invoked in this dull neighborhood that may never be still again. I have often thought how infinitely productive is *one* good word, or thought, or act, its influence extending down generations, still augmenting for ever."

"Ah! Sophie, but while all the light was shed abroad, the shadow was cast black and thick at home; and how it has darkened our home and your young life, Sophie!"

"Some *must* suffer for others," said Sophie, abstractedly.

"And *have* you suffered so much, Sophie?" he inquired, sadly.

"No!—oh, no!—I was thinking of *your* suffering, not of my own, and I thought aloud."

While she spoke, Hagar ente ed from a ride, and brought a letter from Rosalia. When it had been read, and Hagar had left the room to change her riding-habit, he said,—

"How much that girl—I mean Rosalia, writes like one I know—her very spirit speaks through Rosalia's pen, as her form is again before me in Rosalia's person."

"You mean Fanny?"

"Yes, I mean Fanny. You have never, until this moment, mentioned her name to me since the night of Rosalia's arrival, when I angrily forbade your doing so. Often since that I have wished that you might, thus affording me the opportunity of telling you our sad story. I will tell you now, but first, will Hagar be occupied for the next hour?"

"Yes, she has gone to her chamber to answer Rosalia's letter."

"Give me a cordial, Sophie?" She did so, and revived by the stimulant, Withers commenced his story.

"I was the only son of my mother, and she a widow, Sophie. She supported and schooled me by her own exertions until I was eighteen years old, when I fell under the notice of the Rev. Lenox May, who received me into his house to read theology with him. Subsequently I entered college, and soon after taking orders, I had the misfortune to lose my mother. She had lived to see the desire of her heart, however—her beloved son in holy orders. She had seen the ceremony of his ordination, heard him preach his first sermon, heard it universally praised as a miracle of eloquence, thoroughly believed it herself, and was ready to exclaim—'Now let thy servant depart in peace.' Sophie, I never was intended for a minister of the Gospel. If I have made a tolerable one it is because the hard blows of circumstances have hammered me into shape. Accident and my mother's wishes made me one. However, soon after my ordination, I was called to the charge of a parish in a village on the Hudson, and the adulation I there received reconciled me to the profession. I was called handsome and eloquent. The church certainly flourished under my ministry. I was flattered by the circumstance *then; now* I know such is ever the case when a young clergyman of tolerable ability is installed in a parish. But, Sophie, I was foster-nursed by the old ladies of the parish, and out of that grew all my sorrows. South of the village, on an eminence overlooking the river, stood the white granite villa of my wealthiest and most important parishioner, General Raymond. He was a widower, with one child—the child of his old age—Fanny, the sole heiress of his property. Religion, or rather, evangelical theology, was his passion. How sonorous rang his full-toned responses through the church, as standing, his stout form erect, his broad shoulders thrown back *à-la-militaire*, his chest expanding with self-importance, he called himself a 'miserable sinner.' On the first Sunday of my installation he invited me home to dinner with him, and with stately, old-fashioned courtesy conducted me to his carriage that stood waiting at the church-door, and there, as I stepped in, I first saw Fanny Raymond, then a child of twelve years of age, a lovely, little, shrinking creature, who squeezed herself quite into the corner as I took the seat by her side, as you have often seen a playful white kitten draw herself up between fear and defiance, and I instantly felt the same impulse to catch the lovely, shy thing to my bosom that you would

Digitized by Google

have felt to play with the said kitten. So strong was this impulse that it must have spoken through look and gesture, and might have been obeyed but that the pompous old general followed me immediately into the carriage, and announced, "My daughter, Miss Raymond," with as much ceremony as though the sweet child had been a woman of five-and-twenty. She sat there, watching me furtively, her sweet eyes flashing their soft shy light under the shadowy lashes, and quickly averted when met by mine, while rose clouds would roll up over her snowy cheeks. That sweet, shy spirit, whether in the violet, in the fawn, or in the timid girl, always attracted me, Sophie. It was your eyes, that meeting my glance, would startle and dilate in beautiful haze that provoked *your* fate, Sophie. I would have given anything—my parish—the world, then and there to have caught the shrinking child to my bosom, and hugged, and kissed, and romped with her to my heart's content. From that day I was a frequent, and always a welcome and an honored guest at the villa. Time passed, and I rose in popularity, winning golden opinions from all sorts of people, and especially from women. As long as a young minister remains unmarried, unappropriated, unmonopolized, he is sure to be popular; so *my* popularity continued to increase for three years. While watching the development of the child, Fanny Raymond, I had sought the society of no woman. When Fanny was about fifteen years of age, I was sent for one day to the villa. It was to be put in possession of an attested copy of General Raymond's will, by a clause of which I was appointed sole trustee of the estate, until Fanny should come of age. It was during this visit, and in the presence of one of the old ladies of the parish, that General Raymond remarked, 'I am now upwards of eighty years old—I am failing fast; I should like to see Fanny married before my departure, but, alas! that is a comfort for which I dare scarcely pray.' Up to that time I had not thought of aspiring to the hand of General Raymond's heiress. It was my lot that evening to drive the old lady, my fellow-visitor, back to the village in the General's carriage. It was during our ride home that the old lady, one of my foster-mothers, suggested to me the plan, the propriety of my paying my addresses to Miss Raymond, 'For,' said she, 'it is the duty of a young pastor to consider in his marriage the welfare of his parish.'

"I took her advice. I wooed Fanny Raymond—did I love her? No; but her extreme youth, her beauty and graceful shyness strongly attracted me—through that idiosyncrasy that lured me to the pursuit of such. I wooed her, but she avoided, fled from me. That added zest to the chase. I had her father's interest, and I married her. I married her, despite of her reluctance, or rather *because* of her reluctance, and despite of tears, prayers, and resistance. (Here notwithstanding the chastening of illness and sorrow, his eye and lip glowed as with the recollection of piquant joy.) I married her. The wild shy creature, full of emotion as a harp is of music, was in my power—in my grasp. Oh! the wild beating of my heart, when I had caught and held the fluttering bird! Did I love her now? Yes! as the fire loves the fuel it consumes. And *then* she loved *me*, Sophie! or rather *no*, I will not profane the word that expresses *your* pure affection for me, Sophie. But she grew passionately, insanely fond of me—she loved me as the drunkard loves the bowl he feels is his destruction—as the moth loves the flame that must consume it. And then, Sophie! *then*, she lost all attractions for me! From indifference I grew almost to loathe her. I struggled against this growing disgust, but it overmastered me. Poor Fanny! if she had not been the simplest child on earth, if she had possessed the slightest speck of coquetry, this aversion might have been delayed. Poor Fanny!" (Here, overcome by his feelings, he covered his brow with his hand. How quickly varying emotions chased each other through his heart; but this belonged to the high action of his disease.) "We lived with her father. Fanny became a mother at sixteen. General Raymond lived to bless his grandson, and then was gathered to his fathers. We continued to reside at the villa. I utterly neglected her. At the slightest display of fondness on her part, I grew freezingly cold. This was *real*, this was a feeling it was useless to struggle against, as I had found, and as at last she understood. Fanny grieved, suffered, and sought solace in her child. As years passed, she became calm, grew accustomed and reconciled to her lot; and how beautiful she grew as her day advanced from its morning freshness towards the noonday glory it was destined never to reach. How beautiful! At least all the parish said so. *I* could not feel her beauty. Years slid serenely, imperceptibly, over us. We were prosperous. I had the largest property, the most elegant house, and the most beautiful wife in the parish. Besides which I had a growing celebrity. I was vain-glorious, Sophie, *not proud*. There is this difference between pride and vainglory: pride does *not* depend upon the external circumstances of rank, wealth, fame; vainglory *does*. We sometimes speak of *mortifying* pride; *pride* is *never* mortified; it is impossible—it holds itself grandly above all such influences; vanity, self-love, is *often* humbled. I was vain-glorious, not only of my wealth, of my celebrity, of my admired wife—but most of all, of the *intact propriety* of all things appertaining to me. Years slid smoothly over us. I never saw so beautiful a woman as Fanny was at thirty. Few of our women bloom into the full flower—most of them are withered in the bud. Fanny at thirty was the perfect rose of beauty. Why, Sophie, when I took her to New York city, or into any strange company, there was always a half-suppressed murmur of irrepressible admiration. Though I was no longer *proud* of her, yet now that for long years she had ceased to worry me with her unwelcome caresses, there had grown up a calm friendship and confidence between us—she understood me, and *I thought* that I understood her. I never guessed the latent force of passion, augmenting while it slumbered in her heart (sleep is the time for growth), or suspected the burning lava, burning more fiercely for suppression under the snowy exterior of that volcanic bosom! As little dreamed I of impending ruin as the city under the shadow of Vesuvius! About this time the whole country rang with the name of one man. A man dis-

Digitized by Google

tinguished alike for the splendor of his genius, the audacious flight of his ambition, the god-like beauty of his person, and the satanic power of fascination that neither the honor of man nor the purity of woman ever withstood. You cannot fail to identify the man—but *one* such is born in a cycle of centuries. One day I received an invitation to preach an ordination sermon upon the next Sabbath, in the city. I had, during the years of my ministry, received several calls to take charge of large city parishes; but always declined them, because our large property and our home lay near our village. Frequently I was invited to preach in the cities, and then wherever I went crowds gathered. I always took Fanny with me, for the beauty of the woman attracted quite as much attention as the genius of the man. Upon receiving this invitation to preach the ordination sermon, therefore, I procured a substitute to fill my pulpit, and taking Fanny, stepped aboard a steamboat on Saturday morning, and the afternoon of the same day reached the city.

"It had been advertised that I was to preach at that church, and at an early hour it was crowded, packed. As I entered the church and led Fanny up the aisle, I do not know whether I was most vain of her or of myself. I know that my heart was swelling with vainglory as I opened the door of one of the front central pews under the pulpit, handed her in, and passed within the altar to my place. I saw from my high post that Fanny divided attention with me from the few who, packed into the end pews, could obtain a view of her. In the end pew nearest the pulpit, on my right hand, I was surprised and flattered to recognise the celebrated B. I had never had him for an auditor before. I observed that he did not seem to see Fanny, who sat immediately in the angle of his vision, notwithstanding *her* eyes were ever furtively raking him. I was not surprised at this, for to say nothing of his celebrity, he was by far the most distinguished looking man present, both for the striking beauty of his person and the grace and dignity of his attitude and demeanor; but I *was* slightly surprised that he had not seemed to have seen the vision of loveliness and light that was dazzling all other eyes. These were not proper thoughts for a minister of the gospel in the pulpit, but they were mine; and they produced their bitter fruits, brought about their own punishment.

"At the close of the sermon, a few minutes after I had left the pulpit, B. came from his pew, and a mutual friend introduced him to me. My wife was hanging on my arm at the time of this introduction. B. spoke of our village, of General Raymond as having been a valued friend, &c., and of his own intention soon to visit the village. I, like every one else he ever set his eyes upon, was fascinated by his looks and manners. I pressed him to come—and *soon*—and entreated him to come at once to the villa, instead of stopping at a hotel, and to make our house his home, while he should find it convenient or agreeable to honor us with his presence.

"Well, Sophie, I returned home on Monday. In the course of the week, B. visited us. He remained with us an honored guest for two weeks, and in those two weeks, Sophie!—— His manner rather than his words seemed to reveal a warm admiration for me and everything about me. Our elegant house, well-chosen library, our busts and pictures, our tastefully planned grounds, everything seemed to give him a quiet and graceful delight. His manner to me seemed (for all was *seeming*) to reveal a charming mixture of reverence and affection. I was fascinated—drawn in. His manner seemed distant to my wife, *so* distant that I never inclined to *jealousy*, but often to *vanity*; felt piqued that he did not appear to appreciate the merits of *her*, my most brilliant appendage. He visited little while he remained at our house; the charms of our house seemed to rivet him to the place. Parochial duty called me frequently from home; he was left to the hospitable care of my wife. They were much together.

"The last day of his stay approached. And up to that day I was utterly unsuspicious of the cloud lowering black and heavy over my house! utterly unprepared for the descent of the thunder-bolt that blasted my hearth! The day of his departure dawned. It had been arranged between us that I should drive him down to the village, in the carriage, to meet the steamboat that would pass in the evening. But early in the afternoon I was summoned to attend the bedside of a dying parishioner, at an opposite point of the village. I was constrained, therefore, to leave him, promising, however, to meet him at the steamboat hotel, before his departure.

"I left him with Fanny—Oh! let me recall her image, as the last time I saw her in purity and peace: She sat in a chair by the open window, arrayed in a beautiful robe of light blue silk; her air and attitude I noticed *then* was pensive; her elbow rested on the window sill, and her arm, her beautiful arm, encircled by a diamond bracelet, emerged from its sleeve of silk and lace; her hand supported her drooping head, from which her ringlets hung like spiral curls of glittering gold. The other gemmed and snow-like hand hung listless by her side. Strange! I was then inspired with a warmth of affection towards her I had not felt for years. I stepped back as I was about leaving the room, and lifted the snow-flake hand to my lips, and then left the room and the house, for the first time for years, with the wish that I might be able to dispatch my business quickly and return soon. This caprice pursued me, strengthening every inch of the way, as I journeyed from her, until at the solemn bed of death, it was interrupted by the sight of my dying parishioner and his weeping family. I administered the last consolations of religion to the dying man, or at least I read the service for the sick by his bedside, and gave him the sacrament. I soon after took leave, and rode towards the village, where I expected to find B., awaiting the steamboat. I found him in the parlor of the hotel. As the hour of the boat's passing had not quite arrived, I ordered supper, and we supped together. Yes! we sat down once more and broke bread together! Oh! the power of duplicity in that bad man! Had I been the most jealous, as I was then the most unsuspicious of human beings, by no sign in his countenance or manner could I have detected a consciousness in him of the blasting ruin he had wrought in my home! His conversation was as brilliant, his manner as entertaining as ever; and his eyes sought mine

Digitized by Google

with the same earnest sweetness that had ever lived in their expression. At the end of half an hour, the boat stopped at the landing, and I took leave of him with more regret than I had ever felt at parting with mortal man before or since. I pressed him to repeat his visit soon, and make it longer—and he promised! and bade me bear his best wishes and his adieux to Mrs. Withers! I mounted my horse and rode towards home, my thoughts strangely haunted with Fanny—how lovely she seemed in my thoughts! I hastened onwards. I drew near the house.

"'That ride home! How distinctly, how indelibly is every circumstance attending it imprinted on my memory! That ride home through the dark, cool woods, with the moonlight shimmering down through the leaves, with the merry chirp of insects in the trees, with the fresh dew on the grass; with my heart warmer, lighter, gladder, than it had been for years; nothing, nothing to warn me of the ruin before me! I was, except the stirring of a new and glad emotion, as calm as Pompeii under the shadow of Vesuvius. I passed through the iron gate in front of our house—it swung to with a loud clang behind me. To this day the clang of a gate sends a pang to my heart. I passed up the gravel walk between rows of violets whose fragrance filled the air. I recollect it so distinctly. To this hour the smell of violets makes me ill. I jumped from my horse, and throwing the bridle to a servant who came to take it, I hastened up the marble stairs, and into the house. The lamps were not lighted. 'She is enjoying the moonlight of this cool hour,' I said, and I passed into the parlor. The moon was shining through the two large front windows shaded with foliage, and shining in two bright square patches, variegated with the black shadows of the leaves on the carpet; and the leaves in the window and their shadows on the floor trembled in the rising breeze. At first I thought the room was vacant, but looking around, I presently discerned the form of Fanny on a sofa in the back of the room. She lay partly on the floor, partly on the sofa. Her dress disordered, her hair dishevelled, her face down, her arms thrown over her head in an attitude of the uttermost despair—of the last abandonment. Surprised, I approached her, thinking her sick, or perhaps sleeping. I spoke to her—she did not reply. I stooped, raised, and kissed her. *Then* she bounded like a shot from under my embrace, and sank cowering in a distant part of the room. Wondering, I followed her, but she raised, turned away her head, grinding her face into the corner, while she threw up both arms towards me in a frantic, abjuring gesture! I now really fancied that in the dubious light, I had mistaken some one *else* for Fanny; that this could not be she, but was probably some poor mad stroller. I hastened into the hall and called for lights. They were brought, set upon the mantel-piece, and the servant retired. I turned towards her. God! what a thing met my view! Ashy pale, with a wild blaze in her blue eyes, haggard and shuddering, she cowered in the corner, her hands clasping her head, her gaze riveted in phrensied despair upon me! I spoke to her, but she changed not her attitude. I caressed her, and she broke forth in raving madness. God! oh God! Sophie, how can I describe to you the grief, horror, *distraction*, with which I gathered from her raving, the shameful story of *her* fall and of my dishonor! Though earth and hell swam together in my reeling reason, every fact of the loathsome story betrayed in her phrensied remorse struck distinctly on my ear. How the snake had glided nearer to her every day, fascinating her imagination by his brilliancy, stealing into her bosom by his sweet tenderness, lulling her fears and disarming her resistance by his gentle mesmerism, winding coil after coil of his serpent fold around her, and delaying until the last hour—the tender parting hour, the safe hour of sorrowful, tearful adieu, and non-resistance—the *unguarded* hour, to strike his venomed fangs deep in her heart! How sudden was her fall—how quick her recovery! How terrible her remorse! And I, Sophie! *I!*—I said that earth and hell swam together in my reason! I felt a rushing and roaring in my head and ears like the coming of many waters; the earth rocked under my feet, and I thought the end of all things was at hand. I suppose I fell. * * * * The next link in memory was a slow, feeble returning to consciousness—more like a weak babe's first coming into existence than like a man's revival. The first glimmering of sensibility found me extended prostrated on my bed, unable to lift or turn; aye, even to *move* a limb. The only fluttering life seeming to linger in my languid eyes, and in the weak breath hovering in my bosom and on my lips like a soul ready for flight. A dreary, dreary weight that I could then neither understand, nor throw off, lay heavy on my soul. A sorrowful, shadowy face, like a dream of Fanny, floated past my vision. It was the face of Raymond, my son, my constant attendant. Too slowly dawned reason and memory on the night of my intellect to endanger a shock and a relapse. Day by day, and hour by hour, I picked up and restrung the broken and scattered links in the chain of circumstances; and in a few days, before my physical powers were recovered sufficiently to allow me to speak a consecutive sentence, or utter a word above my breath, I understood the height and depth—the full extent of my ruin. But *she!* where was *she?* I saw nothing of her—heard nothing of her. For many days I dared not inquire. At last one day when Raymond was sitting by me with his shame-bowed head leaned upon his hands, my anxiety, by intense thought of her, had become insupportable.

"'Raymond!' said I.

He looked up sorrowfully.

"'Where is your mother, my boy?'

"'Gone!'

"'How!'

"'Fled!'

"'When?'

"'Upon the night of your attack.'

"'Where? with whom?'

"'We do not know.'

"'Has any one pursued her?'

"'No, sir.'

"'Why did not you follow her—seek, save her?'

"'My duty was by your bedside, my father?'

"'Raymond! tell me! how far is this dreadful tragedy known—how far has her frantic remorse, *my* phrensied despair exposed us?'

Digitized by Google

"He was silent, and when I repeated and pressed the question he bowed his young face upon his hands and wept. The tears trickled between his fingers. I understood by his silent grief that our shame was not hidden. After a while, 'Raymond!' said I. He raised his tearful face. You loved your mother?' He sobbed aloud.

"'Go and seek her.'

"'My place is by your side, my father.'

"'Go and seek your mother.'

"'I cannot leave you yet, sir.'

"'Go and seek and save your mother, lodge her in a place of safety, and then return to me.'

"'Alas! sir, you need me every moment—do not command me to leave you.'

"'Raymond! *now* I cannot rest until I know she is found and safe, or *dead*, and so it is with you, boy. Raymond, do you sleep at night?'

"He shook his head mournfully—*so* mournfully. Ah! if our betrayer could have seen our sorrow, his heart—even *his* heart, would have been melted in repentance for all the wreck he had made.

"'Raymond,' said I, 'she has severed the tie that bound her to *me*, but she is your mother still—*that* tie nor life nor death can sever. *I* may not—*must* not see her again; *you* must go and seek her, find her, and find a distant, secluded asylum for her. *You* must tend and care for her, and make her life as tolerable as, with her keen sensibilities, the memory of her awful sin will permit it to be. I give her up to you. To-morrow morning you must set out on your search.'

"He no longer opposed my wish, perhaps it was *his* wish too, in fact. Utterly exhausted by the conversation, I sank into silence.

"The next morning I renewed my charge to him, and, with some difficulty, got him off. Now you will be surprised that I charged one so young, for he was but fourteen, with such a mission, but before any other would I have chosen that lad. Raymond was ever an earnest, thoughtful, and now a sorrow-stricken boy. He left me the second day.

"Upon my first return to consciousness, when I was so weak, I would sometimes recognise a neighbor, or a parishioner, by my bedside, but, unwilling to meet his or her eye, I would close mine, and lie still; and after that I gave orders that no one should be admitted to my chamber. Many days passed. At last Raymond returned, with news of my poor fugitive. Wandering towards the south, she had been arrested. Her rare beauty, her insanity (for she had lost her reason), the mystery that enveloped her, excited interest. She had been lodged in the —— Asylum for the insane, and there she had been left.

"Was it strange that I felt no resentment towards her? Perhaps had I *loved* her more this would have been otherwise; perhaps all feeling of anger was drowned in *humiliation*. At length I got down stairs. It was impossible then to refuse myself to my visitors. They were my oldest and gravest parishioners. They were a long time in breaking the ice of the subject congealing around my heart, but when at length it *was* broken, the waters of sympathy flowed freely. 'Cut off this abomination from your house!' 'Amputate this polluted—this putrid limb, though it were your right hand!' This was their advice, and I followed it. The necessary steps occupied me some time. The necessity of settling my chaotic household and arranging my future plan of living kept me busy for some weeks. Still even then, between the pauses of practical duty, my mind would suddenly fall into stagnation, when neither memory nor reason could be aroused, when only *instinct* kept me silent or sententious, lest I should expose myself; into that terrible state when the mind hovers on the shadowy boundary of madness—the twilight hour between the day of reason and the night of insanity—upon the awful line dividing *conscious* from *un*conscious madness! But madness affects the whole system. The blood was sent in rushing force and choking volume to my heart, and forth again with lightning speed, in lava streams, down my veins, impelling me to leaping phrensy! Oh! how I dreaded when this chained demon would burst the weak fetters of my will! This dread!—this dread! I dared not confide it to any one—dared not consult a physician. I furtively read all the books I could upon the subject, and took all the means I could to avert the impending—the hourly—the momentarily impending horror! Oh, Sophie! on God's earth there is not a grief or terror like this; bearing a fiend in your bosom, bound by the feeblest threads of consciousness and will—threads that you fear and feel may be burst asunder at any moment. I walked with reeling brain upon the slippery edge of a dizzy precipice!—I walked, as it were, upon a mine that threatened every instant to explode! Everywhere—at home, abroad, walking, riding, in the full glory of noonday, in the dark watches of the night, I bore this grenade of the bosom! In the pulpit, Sophie—in the midst of the most closely reasoned argument, suddenly the blood would rush through my veins, and into my head, impelling me to leap, shouting, over the pulpit-top, and throttle some of the people before me. This impending horror—the constant *dread* of it, accelerated the hour of its fall upon me. One day, late in the evening, I was riding home with Raymond. We were, as usual, *silent*, for oh, Sophie! we sat together long hours at home in silence—we rode together long miles without exchanging a word. The forest-path through which we rode was the same one I had passed in going home upon the evening of my household wreck. The shadows were as dark in the woods, the dew was as fresh on the grass, the chirps of the insects as blithe in the trees, and the silvery beams of the moonlight shimmered as brightly through the overhanging leaves. It was the same scene—the same! Every instant the excitement was rising higher in my bosom, growing irrepressible—uncontrollable; until, as we emerged from the forest-path, and passed into our yard—as the iron gate swung to with a clang—as the perfume of violets met me—as the dark front of the house loomed up in the moonlight,—everything reproducing the scene of that fatal evening, insanity broke forth in phrensy, and I became a raving maniac!

"I recovered my reason to learn the value of poor Fanny's son. I awoke one day from a deep sleep—I awoke refreshed, with cooler blood, calmer nerves, and clearer brain, than I had known for weeks, and with a full conscious-

Digitized by Google

ness of all that had passed up to the hour of my loss of self-control. Raymond was sitting by me.

"'Raymond, what has happened?" inquired I.

"'You have been very ill, my father.'

"'I have been MAD!—I know that right well, my boy—but tell me, how long did it last? what did I do? and who was with me?' This last was the most important question—my heart stopped its pulsations until he answered:

"'Your attack spent its *fury in half an hour*, father—you hurt no one but yourself—and—no one witnessed your—your *illness* but myself and the waiter who assisted me in getting you up to bed.'

"'And what did you then do? what did you give me?'

"'Nothing, father; nature did everything, and did it well—art nothing. Your fury spent itself as a storm spends itself—by raging—and then it subsided, as a storm subsides, into perfect calmness; you fell into a deep sleep of exhaustion, which lasted all last night and all to-day, from which you have but just awaked; and you feel better *for* the attack, do you not, father? It has expended the gathering vapors and gloom of many weeks, and you feel better?'

"'Yes, yes, quite well, calm and clear-headed; but, Raymond, with this interregnum in my memory, and this great change in my feelings, it seems to me that a long, long time, has intervened since my attack; *how* long has the time really been?'

"'Not quite twenty-four hours.'

"'Has any one called to-day?'

"'No one.

"'Then none know of this except yourself?'

"'No, sir, none know of this except myself and the waiter, who does not more than half comprehend it, and who, besides, is no gossip.'

"'You understand that I *wish* no one to know of it?'

"'I understand that perfectly, my father; and it shall be my care to guard your secret.'

"It was some time after this that I found how much I had hurt Raymond by a furious blow on the chest dealt in my phrensy.

"From that time, Sophie, my disease became periodical; Raymond was my constant attendant. These repeated attacks of lunacy impaired my temper; I became gloomy, irascible, misanthropic. My attacks of phrensy became less frequent and violent, but my gloom deepened as a natural consequence; for unless I could have been *cured* it was even *better* that these regular storms should disperse the unwholesome vapors of my mind. There is a wonderful analogy between the soul and the atmosphere—storms clear both—though in storms, both mental and atmospheric, there is sometimes much damage done. Well! the storms had well nigh ceased, but the gloom gathered thicker and thicker in my mind, and working up through it was one irrational wish—a desire to re-marry; and with this returned in all its former force my idiosyncrasy—of seeking the reluctant—pursuing the flying—catching the resisting—and in the darkening of my gloom this deepened into the desire of *torturing the victim!* You shudder, Sophie! but this was insanity. Every passion in its excess is moral insanity—every exaggerated idiosyncrasy is mental insanity; and in madness, brought about by any other external cause, the master passion, or the distinguishing idiosyncrasy, if not entirely *reversed*, is exaggerated to phrensy. *My* idiosyncrasy was exaggerated—because morbid. I had left my pulpit fearing that if I did not my pulpit would eject *me*. I had shut myself up in the villa, and brooded over my wish, and the readiest way of accomplishing it. At this time I received a letter from Mr. May, inquiring the reason of my resignation of my pulpit—a notice of which he had seen in the 'Church Organ.' I replied 'domestic affliction,'—'the *loss* of my wife,'—she *was* lost—but need I blazon my dishonor by revealing the *manner* of her loss? *He* understood, simple old man! that she was *dead*, and there he left it. The correspondence ceased. A few months from that time I received at the same moment the news of his death and a call to fill his pulpit. I accepted it, glad to escape from my neighborhood. I sent Raymond off to college—shut up the villa, leaving it in charge of old Jupiter, who lived at a porter's lodge at the gate, and I came down here, full of my purpose of finding another wife. You, Sophie, at first sight, struck my fancy; as usual with my peculiar mood of love, your shrinking from me but lured me to the chase—but added zest to the idea of catching you; your avowed dislike and shuddering antipathy but served to intensify the desire to seize and torture you—forgive me, Sophie! this was insanity. Though constantly threatened with an attack of phrensy, I had not one single one after leaving the scene of my sorrows. I married you, Sophie, as I had married Fanny—in spite of your tears and prayers—in defiance of your antipathy and against your will. When I had thought it was safe to let him know it, when he could no longer interfere, or at least when I thought that there was no *time* left for him to reach here in season,—I wrote and told Raymond—paying him the compliment of the *form* of an invitation—and telling him in the same letter of the escape, flight, and suicide of his mother. He did not come in season, as you know—though he grazed the edge of 'the nick of time.'

"Now, Sophie, for another revulsion of feeling. From the time I first saw you, as I said, the idea of marrying you interested and amused me—your aversion stimulated my stagnant blood agreeably. I *lived* in the thought of getting you into my power—life *came* and waned with this thought. As the day of our marriage approached your antipathy thoroughly aroused me—I gloated over the idea of tormenting and torturing you. But when our marriage day drew *very* near, you fell into apathy! That disappointed me. I thought you were going to die on my hands My interest in you waned with your non-resistance. The wedding-day, the evening came, and I married you. You were then so still in your despair—so cold—so dead!—I felt swindled out of my enjoyment, and half regretted my bargain. I felt as the tyrant must feel when his victim on the rack expires before half the exquisite torments or the crowning torture is tried and suffered. Don't shudder now, Sophie! I *was insane!*

"Well, Sophie, I left your side to have a conversation with Dr. Otterback. I left you almost expiring. When I saw you again, life and light

Digitized by Google

had returned to you. When you came up to me and laid your fair hand on my arm, so softly, and spoke to me so kindly, I gazed in wonder on your face; and, Sophie, the angel looking through your eyes subdued me. Your after kindness melted me into penitence. Still there were adverse influences at work. A mind shaken to its foundation, as mine had been, was not to be calmed soon, or stay calm long. The sudden sight of Raymond, the image of his mother, in her perfect beauty, connecting the present with the past so painfully, affected me more than the sight of Fanny herself had done. Alas! poor Fanny had been scarcely recognisable. I could scarcely realize the identity of that haggard wanderer of the heath with the resplendent beauty of the Villa. But her image lived again in Raymond. Never had the extraordinary resemblance struck me so forcibly, as when, after a long absence from *both*, I again saw Raymond. The associations conjured up, brought on that violent attack of phrensy that seized me at the Hall. Well, Sophie! my guardian angel, you have known all my moods since then. You know how your love has subdued my hate—your heaven redeemed my hell—your angel converted my demon. Enough, Sophie! your probation is almost over. My earthly life is drawing near its close. When I am gone, Raymond will be as a brother to you. Raymond is wealthy. Never since her separation from me have I appropriated a dollar of the fortune that came with his mother. I could not bear to do it. Now, dear Sophie! I am very tired; close the shutters, draw the curtains and leave the room, that I may sleep while you take some relaxation and refreshment."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORM.

"The storm comes in fury! loud roars the wild blast—
Like a quivering reed, shakes the towering mast,
But on the bark dashes, proud, dauntless, and free,
She rides like a gull on the crest of the sea."

CHARLES H. BRAINARD.

HAGAR had gone to her chamber to write a letter. Hagar's room was on the third floor front, at the angle of the old hall. Its front and east windows overlooked the bay for many miles up and down. Its north windows, the bay, the moor, and forest. It was like the wild girl to choose this eyrie! She selected it because its lofty height commanded the bay,—because it was far above the inhabited parts of the house, no soul, except herself, occupying or ever coming near that floor, or even the one beneath it. Then it was very large and airy, and furnished or *un*furnished, to suit the singular girl's fancy. The walls were papered with a German landscape paper, representing parts of the Black Forest, and the exploits of the Wild Huntsman. The floor was painted dark green, and the paint had been worn off here and there in patches; so that in the dusky light the room looked not unlike a wild and darksome forest glade, the scene of some weird revel, shown in silent pantomime. A tent bedstead, with hangings of faded green damask, stood at the furthest extremity of the room; the windows were also curtained with the same material. Between the front windows stood an old-fashioned escrutoire, full of innumerable drawers, closets, and pigeon-holes, which, with one or two heavy old chairs, completed the original furniture of the room. With Hagar's varying mood, her dark and dreamy, or her free, wild mood, the singular girl would close all the shutters, and draw all the curtains, converting the room into a shadowy scene of woodland romance, from which the demon figure of the Wild Huntsman would glimmer out in the gleam of some stray ray of sunlight flickering through a crevice in the closed shutters; or, throwing open the four windows to the day, she would let in a flood of light and air, and the prospect of half a hemisphere of blue sky and salt water. Her room now, as she sought it, was light, free, and exposed as the highest peak of the promontory; and the rising wind rushed through it in a strong, fresh current, swelling and flapping the heavy curtains like the heavy sails of a ship. She entered her room, and before sitting down to write, laid off and put away her riding habit in one of the dark closets, and went to the windows and drew aside, looped up and confined the curtains, to keep them from flapping in the wind; *reefed* them, as a sailor would say. Then she gazed anxiously out upon the boundless bay, where the freshening gale was rolling up the waves against the advancing tide, and upon the darkening sky where clouds were piled like ink-hued mountains from horizon to zenith, and upon the distant sail of a wave-tossed packet that gleamed like a snow-flake on the black bosom of the water an instant, and then, like a snow-flake, would melt and disappear in the rise of an intervening wave.

"God! if Raymond should be in that bark!" she cried, as her falcon glance descried it.

Seizing her small telescope (one of her toys when a child, one of her jewels when a woman), she levelled it at the distant bark. She gazed eagerly. On struggled the frail vessel between wind and wave, tacking from side to side, now driven forward by the gale, now thrown back by the tide. She gazed anxiously. The thunder muttered in the distance. The gale quickened, and now stronger than the tide, drove on the fragile bark before it, reeling and pitching like a drunken man. She left the window and the room, and hurrying down stairs, hastened from the house, fled to the promontory, and stood upon the extreme point of the peak gazing out upon the waters.

The sky was black as night. The bosom of the bay heaved like a strong heart in a strong agony. On came the vessel bounding and rebounding before the wind, until it was brought up suddenly by the strong current of the waves that whirled around the point of the promontory; and then it heaved and tossed between leaping and flashing waters and buffeting winds! There on that maelstrom it heaved and set like a guilty wish in an ardent soul, driven on by the gale of passion and opposed by the tide of conscience, and nearly wrecked between them. There it heaved and set, vainly struggling to round the promontory, and enter the harbor of Churchill's Point. There it rolled and writhed

Digitized by Google

and groaned; now raised by a towering wave, now thrown down a yawning ocean cavern, while the lightning glared, and the thunder breaking overhead rolled rumbling down the abyss of distance! Upon the extreme point of the peak, like the spirit of the storm, stood Hagar, her hair and raiment flying in the gale around her, her eyes fixed upon the writhing vessel. Suddenly with a sharp cry, scarce touching with her light foot the points of the crags that served her for steps, she sped down the dizzy precipice; she had recognised Raymond, just at the moment when the slight vessel, lifted by an uprearing giant wave, was pitched upon the rocks at the base of the promontory! Shot from the deck into the air by the sudden concussion, three or four men dropped into the sea at the distance. Hagar's eyes with a rapid glance traversed the bosom of the waters. She saw one or two sturdy sailors rise, buffeting the waves and struggling to reach the shore. But she saw not Raymond, though with pausing brain, breathless lungs, and bursting heart, she watched the surface of the now subsiding waters. At last at some distance up the coast she saw him rise, struggle, catch at the air, half leap from the water, fall, turn over and disappear under the wave, that was colored with his blood! She bounded forward and sprang upon her boat. Unmooring it and casting the ropes behind her, she seized the oar and dashed into the midst of the boiling sea. Urging on her boat between flashing foam and brine, she passed the eddy around the point, and rode rocking forward upon the rising and falling waves towards the spot she had seen him sink at. Keeping her eyes down the current where she supposed he would be whirled, she again saw him rise and struggle. She pulled swiftly for the spot, reached it, while he, lashing the waves with his arms, seized the side of the boat, and turned himself suddenly and heavily in, his weight pitching the light skiff upon one end. Hagar, with her skill and presence of mind, threw her whole weight upon the oar at the other end, and thus righted the boat. With a look of earnest gratitude to Hagar, Raymond seized the other oar, and they pulled for the shore. The sudden storm had spent its fury. It was now passing off, like a woman's fit of anger in a passion of tears, in a heavy shower of rain. They pulled for the shore, but Raymond pulled painfully. They reached the beach where the captain, mate, and two men that composed the whole crew of the small craft, were waiting under the drenching rain.

"Are all here, all safe?" asked Raymond, as he stepped upon the sand.

"All safe! thank God!" answered the skipper.

"But you, Raymond, you are wounded!" said Hagar, laying her hand upon a blood-stained rent on the shoulder of his jacket. Even at her light touch he involuntarily shrank slightly as he replied—

"Not much, dear Hagar."

"But you *are*," said she, speaking rapidly, "you are pale and weak, you were thrown upon a sharp rock, your shoulder was struck and wounded; you have lost much blood; it crimsoned the wave when you first rose, though now it has been staunched by the cold water, and the stains are almost effaced—come home! oh, come! lean on my arm, Raymond, it is strong if it is a little one,—for once let me assist you as you have heretofore sustained me. Come, Raymond! come, brother! come!" and her wild eyes softened into gentleness, and her proud eyes into pleading, as, standing on a point of rock above him, she held down her hand imploringly, to assist in the ascent. He smiled gently, and man-like, scorned, while he could do without it, to receive from her the help he so much needed. Turning to the sailors, he told them to seek the Hall, pointing out the shortest path of ascent. They were quick in following his direction, and had reached the top of the heath and carried the news of the wreck, the preservation of the crew, and announced the arrival of Raymond Withers, while the latter was yet toiling, pale and nearly fainting, at the side of the cliff. Hagar climbed or waited, beside him. At length they reached the top, and paused. Raymond was breathless and reeling—his wound, started by his toil, was bleeding afresh.

"My brother, why will you not let me help you?" pleaded Hagar, again offering her hand. He shook his head mournfully,—he was too faint to talk, and signed for her to lead the way to the hall, where he followed, painfully.

In the closed and curtained chamber Mr. Withers slumbered. The noise of the storm faintly murmured through that inner room, only lulling him into deeper sleep. Sophie, in her reveries, had not thought of the possibility of a packet exposed to the storm, far less of Raymond's danger; so that before she had thought of peril, the shipwrecked sailors stood before her, claiming shelter.

Hagar and Raymond slowly approached the Hall, and entered it. "Now, dear Raymond, your father is sleeping, I think; go and change your clothes, and lie down and rest before you present yourself to him; your clothes are lost, I suppose; but come with me and I will show you into your father's dressing-room; you can furnish yourself from his wardrobe." Then seeing how pale he looked and noticing his bleeding wound, she hastily said;—"But oh! of what am I thinking? Let me call Sophie to dress your wound." And conducting him into a dressing-room, she turned to leave him to summon Sophie. He had sunk exhausted into a deep chair, and holding out his arms, said, very calmly—

"Come, Hagar, my little sister, you have given me no kiss of welcome since I came. Come, Hagar!" She started, turned, made one step towards him, paused, the blood rushed to her brow, then recovered herself, waved him a smiling denial, and left the room. And yet she had met the kiss of Gusty May with saucy cordiality.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEATH CHAMBER.

"Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain.
Death wounds to cure; we fall: we rise; we reign;
Spring from our fetters; fasten to the skies;
When blooming Eden freshens on our sight
This king of terrors is the prince of peace."
YOUNG.

AUTUMN had deadened into winter. The brilliant foliage of the autumn woods had been hurtled off and whirled away in the winter wind. The trees were bare, their branches like black ink tracings against a background of white. The river was frozen over, the creek was frozen over, the bay near the shore was crusted with ice. The ground was covered with snow—the sky was misty-white with clouds. In very pale colors was the winter landscape drawn—in very pale colors, like the white, wan face, and the blue-grey hair of a very old man. The pale cloud-mottled grey sky above; the pale green frozen bay and river, and the snowy ground with its black ink tracery of bare trees and forests, and its dark red square old Hall on the promontory. The white snow-clouds thickened in the air as the night fell on the 18th of December. The wind arose, and a driving snow-storm came on. And through the gathering darkness on the heath shone one beacon—a light in an upper chamber window of the hall. And towards it, through the driving storm, toiled one traveller,—a fat old gentleman on a fat old horse. It was Dr. Otterback on his way to the sick bed of Mr. Withers. The bishop had been on a tour of confirmation through his diocese, and was at that time sojourning over a Sabbath at Churchill's Point. In a quarter of an hour more he was at the Hall, he was in the sick room. This was the scene. It was a large room, carpeted with a thick carpet that gave no sound to the footfall. The windows were curtained with dark heavy curtains, lined, that let no noise through them from without. A dim lamp sat on the hearth, and cast up high monstrous shadows to the ceiling, that loomed black through the dimmer darkness like shadows through the night, and swayed to and fro, and up and down, in the flare of the lamp. Without was softly heard the smothered sough of the wind and snow, like the sob of lost spirits wailing to enter. At the furthest end of the room from the windows, stood a tall, square, canopied bedstead, with the heavy curtains looped back to the head-posts. Upon it lies a dying man, and around him are gathered his family. Draw near, though it is a sight of anguish to see the death of a life that has been much error, and *all* bitterness. Draw near. His sallow face in its wreath of uncut black hair and whiskers, is drawn in strong relief against the pile of snow-white pillows that support his head. His sallow hands are laid out at length upon the dark coverlid. His eyes, small and black in the death intensity, now burn in the countenance of the bishop, who stands at the foot of the bed, repeating at intervals, in answer to that anguished gaze, such texts of Scripture as promise redemption by faith. On his right hand, within the shadow of the curtain, sits Sophie, very pale and still, her hands clasped with awe. On his left hand stands Raymond, leaning his elbow on the head-board and bowing his face upon his open hand, while the heave and fall of his chest silently betray the son's sorrow for the father. By the side of Raymond, and with her fingers clasped in his hand, which he presses from time to time as a surge of emotion agitates him, stands Hagar; but her crimson cheek and glittering eye display more excitement than awe, in the death scene she witnesses.

"You love him, Hagar?" at last very low whispered the dying man. Hagar's cheek paled, while her fingers quivered slightly in the hand of Raymond. "Love him—*gently*, Hagar," then he said, and turned his eyes on Sophie, while his sallow hand crept by the fingers towards her. She saw and raised the hand, rubbed it, pressed it between her own, but it grew colder in her clasp.

"Good-bye, my guardian angel," he said very softly, and turned his troubled eye again upon the bishop. Sophie saw that troubled glance, and silently prayed that the perturbed spirit might pass in peace. At last at a motion from the bishop all sank upon their knees. But Sophie, while she knelt, could not withdraw her gaze from the eyes that still hopeless sought comfort in *her* eyes. The prayers for the dying were commenced, and as they progressed Sophie loved to see the anguish of expression soften away from his face—his brow grew calm, his eye steady, and she felt that at last his soul had found peace in believing. It was in a smile his eyes faded away from hers—in a smile that his spirit passed away, as sometimes after a stormy day the sun glances out beneath a bank of clouds, and smiling a good-night, sinks. When they arose from their knees, the clay was vacant. The bishop closed the empty eyes, and then by a motion marshalled the family all from the room. Raymond at once sought his own chamber. The bishop followed Sophie into the parlor. Hagar went out into the dining-room to assist Mrs. Buncombe, who was now at the Hall, taking charge of its housekeeping just at this crisis. The tea-table was being set in great style under her direction—this was in honor of the bishop's presence in the house. Hagar at once lent her a cheerful assistance. She began powdering some delicate tarts with loaf sugar. Thus life and death, luxury and decay, the table and the coffin, the most awful event of a lifetime, the most trivial occurrences of the moment, jostle each other, nor may either be entirely crowded off the stage of existence. Mrs. Buncombe looked very grave, and at last she said half reprovingly to Hagar,

"You seem very cheerful, Hagar, while your uncle lies in the agonies of death!"

"I should not be cheerful if he were in the agonies of death—he is released, and there was no agony. I could not have believed that a spirit could have been withdrawn from the body with so little pain to either!"

"And so he is gone!" said Emily, in a tone of pity. "So he is gone. Well, 'after life's fitful fever he sleeps well!' peace be with him!"

"Yes, peace be with him. May his cradle be soft—may his nurses be tender—may his parents be gentle and wise, and may his present life—the life just commenced—be happier than his past pilgrimage, the life just closed!"

Digitized by Google

She had spoken earnestly.

"Why, what in the name of heaven are you talking of, Hagar?" asked Emily, in astonishment.

"Of the man just dead, and the babe just born!"

"I believe you are crazy, Hagar!—at least any one who did not know you as well as I know you, would believe so. What do you mean by such language?"

She had finished setting the table, and had now sat down by the fire. Hagar was standing by her, leaning with her back against the side of the mantel-piece.

"This is what I mean: there is no death, but only change. I do not see death. I cannot find death anywhere in the world. I see change, but no destruction—no, not even loss of identity. See how one principle—any principle in chemistry, for instance, will pass through a thousand media, assuming a thousand forms, but not losing itself, not changing its own individuality. Yes, one principle will pass through the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, and pass again circulating for ever without losing itself. And so with our spirit, as it struggles up through hardest, seemingly deadest forms of existence, to its human form; and from the lowest human nature up to the highest; from the savage to the civilized man; and from a common-place civilized man, up to a Howard or a Fenelon; and from a Howard, perhaps, to an angel, but always with more or less speed—*up! up!*—never falling, never losing, never retrograding, relapsing. Thus, a soul that has passed through the schooling of civilization, never, never in its transmigrations, relapses into the body of a savage. I stood by and watched the passing away of uncle's spirit, and wondered to see Christians looking so sad, as though it were annihilation and not a journey; as though they did not see that God was wise enough, and good enough, and potent enough to take care of the soul He had brought thus far in its course. I stood by, thinking that around some other bed some other people were gathered, awaiting the arrival of a newborn infant, and that when the wail of sorrow arose in this room for the dead, the voice of rejoicing would be heard in that room for the new-born! And I watched in eagerness, in excitement, but not in sorrow, not in regret. Could *I* regret that his spirit was withdrawn from its present racked and ruined home? No, I am glad!" she said, with dancing eyes.

"And you really believe that, Hagar? I mean your theory of transmigration?"

"Believe—believe," said she, musing; "no, it does not amount to belief, and yet it is *more*. It is not a belief, a creed; it is a feeling, an impression, and a very strong conviction. To me, spiritual intuitions are more convincing than rational deductions. Heart convictions stronger than brain convictions."

"Alas! Hagar, the neglect of your infancy will never, *never* be made up to you. Poor girl, your mind strays off into the wildest vagaries. Hagar, you should read your Bible more."

"I do read my Bible," said Hagar, "but no *commentaries* on it; the Bible itself is my commentary on nature; it interprets myself and the universe to me."

"You find nothing like what you fancy in the Bible."

"I find nothing that contradicts it there."

"I must get Mr. Buncombe to talk to you, Hagar."

Hagar smiled derisively.

"Yes, I *will*, and I can talk to you myself; 'There is an appointed time for man to die, and *after death the judgment*;' mind, it does not say, after death a transmigration."

"No," said Hagar, "it says, 'after death—*the judgment*'—that very judgment may remand the soul back to earth for another probation!"

"You horrify me, you positively *do* horrify me, Hagar!"

"You horrify *me*, when you tell me that for the sins, or errors, or *mistakes* even, of some sixteen or sixty years, my soul must wail in perdition, through the countless ages of eternity—no, no!—no, no! My Father!" said the wild girl, kindling into enthusiasm, "Thou never did'st create a soul to let it drop into the abyss—*lost!* It may take a long time to teach—a long time to redeem that soul—to perfect that soul—many times may it be remanded back to the clay—many weary pilgrimages may it make on earth, but the work will never be abandoned; the work will be accomplished. Christ did not live, and teach, and suffer, and die in vain—His lesson will be learned at last."

"My poor Hagar," said Emily, fervently, "may you yet learn *His* lesson! He who came to light up that darkness of the grave which the eye of man could not penetrate—to substitute for the thousand wild fancies, such as yours, of Heathenism, the holy Truth of God—He, whom you so rashly invoke, has said—do you not remember it, Hagar?—

"'And he shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

"'Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

"'Then shall He also say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

"'*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal!*'

"Ah, my poor, dear Hagar, how little these wild fancies of yours will bestead you in the trials and temptations of life. Oh! what an untrimmed vine you are, Hagar! May the pruning knife of God's providence gently, very gently, remove all this bad over-growth."

Hagar's fierce eyes flashed defiance at her monitress; but just then a vision of Raymond, in his lonely grief—of Raymond, the only heart-stricken mourner for the dead, passed before her mind's eye; the fierceness softened in her eyes, and she glided from the room. Just at that moment tea was brought in, and Mr. Buncombe and Dr. Otterback summoned to the table, and with Emily, gathered around it.

Hagar glided like a spirit up the long staircase. The storm had passed, and the moon was shining through the windows. She passed into an upper room. A dark figure intercepted at the window the rays of the moon. A dark figure sitting alone, with head dropped upon the arms that, folded, rested on the window-sill. Very softly she approached, and stood by him in silence. He felt her approach, however, and

Digitized by Google

turning around, passed his arm around her waist, and, drawing her up to his side, murmured—

"My own dear Hagar, you have come to me at last; you are here at last; why did you not come before?"

"Because *then*, Raymond, I was in no condition to give you comfort in the mood *you* then were; my mind was excited, enthusiastic. I could not feel this passing away as anything but a relief—a glory—could not think of it as anything to mourn for, but rather to rejoice at. Why, Raymond, death has been called a 'leap in the dark,' but to me it seems a bound in the light!"

"Ah, but Hagar,—the flesh—the flesh—I loved my father so much; I loved him for all his sorrows, and because he found favor in no other heart. I suffered so much at the banishment endured for his sake, and now I come home only to light him down to the grave."

"Raymond, when you left here, some years ago, you left your cast off raiment in your chamber, and they packed it down in a trunk. When you stepped aboard the boat that carried you to the packet, I, impatient child! threw myself down, and screamed in anguish, at parting from my brother, or stretching out my arms beseechingly, called you to come back. Now, Raymond, according to your creed, I had better have gone and cast myself across your trunk—the grave of your cast off dress, and howled for Raymond, *coffined within*."

Raymond again answered her, for his was not after all that deep, *deep* grief which plunges its victim into silence.

"I loved that soul-raiment—I loved that thin and wrinkled hand, that lately deprecated harsh judgment while it caressed me—I loved that tortured face, traversed as it was by its thousand seams of thought or suffering, and that slow pausing step. I loved it all—but *you*, Hagar, a woman—a girl, a young girl, and yet you have so little *tenderness*—the falcon, not the dove!"

Hagar, at once spirited and delicate, did not repel this charge, nor did her mind fly back to the many nights of sleeplessness she had passed in the sick chamber of his father while Raymond slumbered soundly in his bed; nor did she know that though she had felt very *tenderly* she had acted *kindly*, while the son who really loved his father so tenderly loved *himself* as well, and took his rest.

"Have I hurt you, Hagar?" at last he said gently.

"No, I do not know that you have."

"*Have* I hurt you, Hagar?" he said, now sadly.

"No, no; I am not sensitive—not very tender of myself any more than of others. No, you do not understand me—that I feel *life* so much more than death—so much *life* everywhere. Why, Raymond, my feeling about *my own death* is that of escape, flight, revel in liberty and light. I stand upon the banks of our river sometimes, and feel like gathering myself up for a leap across the flood; yet there I stand, fast fettered by flesh. I stand some mornings at early dawn at my chamber window, and, gazing rapturously at the morning star, my spirit uneasily flaps its wings for a flight! Yet there I stand fast tied to the body; so wild and strong is the spirit, and so heavy and fast its chains."

Yes, she spoke truly—so wild, and strong, and fierce was the spirit, whose fire was to be quenched in tears of blood dropped slowly from the heart.

Sophie now came in, and observing Hagar, said,

"Ah! it is right for you to be here, my love; we have a common sorrow, and I feel that *I* should not have gone apart;" and she sat down with them.

The funeral of John Huss Withers took place on the fifth day from his death. Dr. Otterbuck remained to officiate. Mr. Buncombe of course succeeded him in the rectorship of the parish of the Crucifixion. It was during this visit of the bishop that the Parish Church, enlarged and repaired, was re-christened and dedicated under the name of the Ascension. This was done through the suggestion of Mr. Buncombe and the vestry. A year passed away.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHASE.

"Listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerily rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill
Through the high wood echoing shrill."
MILTON.

THE forest rang with the cry of the hounds and the shout of the huntsmen. And now the sounds would die away and now peal out upon the air as the chase still kept up the winding course of the river towards its head. One foremost in the chase drew rein upon the brink of an awful chasm, a deep rocky gorge full of pointed crags, among which the torrent roared and whirled in an agony of haste to escape from the torture. It was Hagar, who, with wild heart, fierce eye, and crimsoned cheek, drew up upon the brink. Behind her thundered the steed of one, whom hearing, she looked behind, reined back her hunter on his haunches, and giving him a cheer and shout, cleared the chasm at a bound. It was an awful leap. The hoofs of the horse just grazed the edges of the rocks as he planted them firmly and struggled up the bank.

The other rider, who was no other than our friend, Gusty May, paused breathless on the rocky ledge and gazed at her. Her steed was dancing on the opposite bluff, her form was exultant, her eye flashing. Raising her riding-cap above her head, she waved it in the air, and, with a joyous shout of defiance, shot down the ravine and disappeared.

"Devil fetch that girl!—God bless her!—she'll break my heart or her own neck, or both, yet!—I know she will! Now what the deuce is to be done? My horse can never take that leap—never!—the attempt would be certain death to both. But then if I shirk it, she will say—I know she will—the little limb of Old Scratch!—that I was afraid." Gusty was in a perfect puzzle. "If there were an *equal* chance now of life and death one might venture, but as it is—pshaw!" And so muttering, he turned his horse's head, and rode up the course of the

Digitized by Google

stream to where the chasm was narrow, and over which a rude bridge had been constructed.

Hagar was the first in at the death—down in the dark ravine. Other hunters approached rapidly from other points, and last, upon account of his delay at the gorge, up rode Gusty May, just in time to see the hunters separate, and to attend Hagar to Heath Hall.

Seeing the intense mortification depicted in his countenance, she turned her wild eyes on him kindly, and said,

"You must get a better hunter, Gusty; I could not have spurred that steed to the leap."

They rode on up the dark ravine until it emerged into the sunlight, then they ambled over the heath towards the Hall; many clumps of trees diversified the rolling surface of the heath, and as they emerged from these, Gusty suddenly laid his hand upon Hagar's bridle and, growing very red in the face, dropped it again, sighing like a sough of wind in the main-sail. Surprised, Hagar looked at him, which look did not recompose his nerves at all. He stopped his horse. Hagar shot on before. He set spurs to his horse and bounded after her. With a sudden freak the wild girl gave rein to her horse and fled over the heath. Piqued, Gusty drew up and ambled along at dignified leisure. After racing to the end of her course, Hagar whirled about and came galloping back. Gusty awaited her, and then they paced on together in silence, until at length Gusty spoke out with the air of a youth who had made up his mind *to* speak, let the consequences be what they might.

"Yes, I *will* speak, Hagar! You *must* hear; though you cut so many shines, it is very difficult to get the chance to say a word. Hem! Hagar!"

"Well, Master Gusty! I'm all attention."

"Well, then, I like you!"

"Why, so I always flattered myself."

"Well, but I'm not joking—I *do*—I *do indeed*. I be whipped if I don't!"

"Really!"

"Yes—and—"

"Well!"

"I like you more and more!"

"'Pon honor, now?"

"Yes, I do, Hagar. Oh! don't look at me, you wicked witch! I like you so—so much! God Almighty *knows* I do! better than I like my ship!"

"Come!" said Hagar, seriously, almost sadly, "tell me what is there you like about me? liking is not to be lightly thrown away, if it be well based—come!"

"Well, there is a—a—an attraction—a something in your face that fascinates—that—that *draws*, that *pulls*, that *nails*, that *rivets*, as it were!"

The girl turned her sparkling face up to the sun, to hide the smile that was breaking through it, while she said,

"Come, say that over again! Let's hear it again, Gusty!"

"Pshaw! Hagar, be serious—I love you—by my soul's honor I do, Hagar!—truly, deeply, fervently! Look at me, Hagar; let me see your face. You are silent—you turn it quite away!" and he suddenly wheeled around and confronted her. "You are laughing, hard, hard girl! Kite's-heart, you are laughing!"

And now she flashed the full light of her eyes in his face, as she said,

"I don't know how it is that I always laugh when other people would cry. I believe I am a lineal descendant of the laughing philosopher. Now, Gusty, my childhood's friend, I am laughing at your phantasy. You do *not* love me; it is a mere illusion of the imagination. Your heart is cheating itself with the semblance of love, in default of the substance."

"How do you know that, Hagar?"

"By my own heart. Love, *love* is always mutual! and in my heart lives no love for you beyond the sisterly affection I must ever feel; but that, Gusty, is deeper and stronger than often sisters feel for brothers. But when you talk to me of other love, you shock and repulse me; and that, Gusty, teaches me that *you* do not really love me, but are only self-deceived by 'the strong necessity of loving,' that 'strong necessity of loving' that leads so many impatient hearts to ruin. Listen, Gusty. Marriages are made in heaven, but most marriages are seldom consummated. God, who doeth all things well, places on earth the mutual instincts of attraction in such souls as are intended for each other. In the whirl and jostle of this world, it is often that these souls never meet, but it is oftener that the impatience of the heart to *love* and to *be* loved, leads it into the delusion that it *does* love and *is* loved. Wait, Gusty; do not add to the confusion by marrying when you only fancy you love. Wait, and your chance of meeting your own will be greater!"

"But, my heart, my heart!" said Gusty.

"Oh, your heart, your heart! *Still* the wailing of the spoiled child if you can, but do not let it have the serpent it cries for—illusory love!"

"You, who know so much about love, whom do you love, Hagar?"

The color deepened to crimson on the girl's dark cheek, and touching her horse, she rode forward. He followed, and again overtaking her, said,

"Hagar, you have talked a great deal of nonsense. You say that love is always mutual?"

"Yes."

"And that a one-sided love is an illusion?"

"Yes."

"How comes it, then, that this one-sided love, this illusion, is sometimes so strong as to drive its victim to madness or suicide?"

"In the first place, Gusty, all that *appears* to be one-sided love, is *not so*. Love is often returned where it is not acknowledged—often proffered where it is not felt; there is so much false semblance in the world; and then again, Gusty, the fact of the one-sided love *being* an illusion is the great cause of its eventuating in insanity. Moral illusions, mental illusions, are only other names for insanity."

They rode on towards the Hall in silence; then suddenly out spoke Gusty with energy, and said

"Hagar, this is all phantasy of *yours*, not of mine. I love you—I wish to pass my life with you—now do not tell me that my case is hopeless. Hagar! do not—I will be so patient, although mother used to say that I was Gusty by name and Gusty by nature. Come, Hagar, let me hope, and I will be so—"

She wheeled her horse suddenly around, and, confronting him, said, very earnestly,

Digitized by Google

"Gusty, you must never think of me as a wife, for I can never love you as a wife."

"Oh, Hagar, if you would only try to like me a little—"

"*Try!*" exclaimed the wild girl, and her laugh rang out upon the air, awaking the echoes, "*Try!* —there, I said you knew nothing about love—*Try!*"

"Then *you* know something of it, you have given your heart to another. Come, Hagar, if you want to put me out of my misery by one stunning blow, say that! say that!"

But Hagar sprang from his side, and trotted quickly into the yard of the Hall, kissing her hand to him as she went. He looked after her, doubting whether to follow her in or not. Finally, he slowly turned aside, and slowly paced his horse off to his mother's cottage.

Grove Cottage was lighted up, and the lights glimmered through the intervening trees, as he rode up the grape-walk, towards the door. Dismounting, and giving his horse in charge of a boy, he passed through the parlor into his own room immediately, scarcely noticing by a bow the rector or his mother, who were seated there. But the eyes of his mother saw his disturbance. She arose and followed him into the room. Gusty was sitting down on the foot of his bed, holding his temples together between his two hands.

"What is the matter, Augustus, my dear? does your head ache?"

Gusty did not reply.

"*What* is the matter, Gusty?" again she inquired, stooping down near him till the ends of her ringlets (for she still wore her hair in ringlets) brushed his cheek.

"A *coup-de-soleil, belle-mère, un coup-de-soleil.*"

"Gracious goodness! my dear, I never heard of such a thing at this season of the year! You must have your feet bathed, and ice on your head," and she was hurrying off to get the requisites.

"Come back, *petite maman*, the *coup-de-soleil* flashed from Hagar Churchill's eyes of fire, and struck my heart; bring ice for my heart, dear mother, or rather *no*, she administered enough of that," said he, in a lachrymose tone. Emily Buncombe had stopped, turned round and stood still to hear him. When he ceased, she set the candle down on his dressing-table, and sitting down by his side, she said,

"Indeed, I really was afraid of this—so you have lost your affections to Hagar?"

"Couldn't help it, mother dear."

"Gusty! you know I love you." Gusty looked up inquiringly. "I am the best friend you have in the world, am I not?"

"My dear mother."

"And I would not call upon you to make a sacrifice for *my* sake, or for anything except duty, and your own happiness?"

"Mother!"

"Well, Gusty, I beg that you will give up all idea of Hagar."

"Alas! mother, she has told me as much herself."

"I am very glad of that."

"Yes, mother, *that* was the sun stroke."

"You must not think of her any more, Gusty."

"What is the use of telling me *that*, mother, when she has rejected me?"

"Oh!" said the mother, with maternal pique, "as to her *rejecting* you, Gusty, *that* was a girlish air—nine girls out of ten reject their lovers at first to try them—*you* must resign her."

But Gusty heard nothing but the first part of the speech—jumping up, he caught his mother around the neck and gave her a boisterous kiss, caught her up in his arms, ran around the room with her, set her down, exclaiming,

"Jupiter Tonnerre! mother, you have given me so much life, strength, force—what shall I do with it till to-morrow when I can carry it to Heath Hall and lay it at Hagar's feet, say, mother! have you got a cord of wood to cut, a forest to fell—a—a—Lord! mother, if I could get hold of this earth I feel strong enough to hurl it through space!"

Now he was walking up and down with glowing cheeks and dancing eye, swinging his arms and bringing his hands together with a clap, and turning off impatiently where the walls of the short room arrested him, just as you have seen a wild beast chafe in his cell. And Emily walked up and down uneasily behind him. At last he threw himself heavily in a chair. Emily came to him.

"So, mother, girls mean 'yes' when they say 'no;' you can vouch for that by your own experience, hey, mother?"

Emily had seen her mistake in having suggested this, and it added to her uneasiness.

"Gusty," she said, "whatever Hagar might have meant by her 'no,' that 'no' has fully exonerated you, if your rather emphatic attentions had raised hopes in her bosom. You must give up all attentions to her for many reasons."

"And how coolly you say that! Great God! how coolly you say that! As if you had spoken of the mere bagatelle of giving up my *life*, of the mere trifle of losing my *soul*. *Hagar!* Stop, mother, let me hold my head tightly—there! so! now perhaps it won't divide through the top—now, mother, tell me why must I give up Hagar?"

"First and least, you are not rich, and Hagar is poor. Miss Churchill is the sole heiress of Heath Hall and the contiguous estate; that sounds very grandly, but just consider that Heath Hall is a ruin that daily threatens to topple down upon and entomb alive its proprietor, and that the Heath itself is now an irreclaimable desert."

"Dearest mother, that is not like you—Hagar's poverty! I wish—I wish she was nameless as well as penniless, and I wish I was commander-in-chief of the American army, so that I might have everything to give her, and she everything to receive from me."

"But it is not so, you see, Gusty; for though she may have plenty of need, you have nothing to bestow, you also are poor!"

"Poor! *me* poor! Mother, where am I poor at?" exclaimed Gusty, starting up and stretching himself—"*me poor!* with all this strength to struggle, and the world to struggle against! Oh! for God's sake, stand out of my way everybody! give me room! swing! sweep! lest I hurt some one unintentionally! I feel like

Digitized by Google

Strong-back in the fairy tale, and I wish some one would commission me to take an island up out of the Atlantic and carry it across the American continent to the Pacific; or, mother, would you like an iceberg for a butter-cooler, or mother, say the word and I'll bring you the North pole for a churning stick. And then, mother, I have so much faith. Hurrah! Hallelujah! haven't I faith! God bless you, mother, I have 'the faith to move mountains,' for look you, mother, when I say to the mountain, 'Be thou removed and be thou cast into the midst of the sea,' I lay right hold of the mountain bodily and hurl it into the water myself, to put life into faith, for 'faith without work is dead,' and 'God helps those who help themselves.'"

Emily looked at him gravely and said,

"That is from Hagar, that wild perverted spirit will ruin you! Oh you irreverend boy, what would your sainted father say if he could see you and hear you."

"Don't you suppose he *does* see and hear me, mother? *I* do."

"I hope he watches over you. I hope his spirit will stand between you and that wild dark girl."

"That Hagar of the lightning! That electric Hagar whose touch might kindle a statue to life! Talk of a galvanic battery! Why, mother, everything that passes from her hands to mine is galvanized! That magnetic Hagar! why, mother, everything of hers is magnetized so that it sticks to my fingers, and I am obliged to carry it off—her glove, her tiny shoe, the eagle feather she wore in her riding cap. I shall be taken up for petty larceny yet. Hagar the magnet! Hagar the North star, who draws me involuntarily, inevitably after her!"

"She did not draw you across Devil's Gorge this afternoon," said Emily, maliciously. Gusty wilted down all of a sudden.

"Mother, who told you *that?*"

"Why everybody, it is all over the neighborhood, how in *our* woods the witch didn't pursue Tam O'Shanter, but Tam O'Shanter the witch, and how she carried all his courage with her when she swept across the gorge. Come, Mr. Gusty, you have been talking very grandly, sublimely, about strength, and force, and impetuosity, and irresistibility, but I have heard very loud thunder before now that did very little damage!"

"So! but you never heard very loud thunder that did not do a great deal of *good!* Ha! I have you there, *mamam!* but never mind, mother, next time I ride a hunt with Hagar I'll follow her through fire and blood, now mind if I don't. I'll purchase a hunter, then see!"

"Then see you'll break your neck; but I have a worse fear for you than that, Gusty, a far worse fear for you than that. This Hagar, she is the talk of the whole neighborhood; her eccentricity, her improprieties, expose her to severe animadversions."

"Her originality you mean; her independence; her free, strong, glorious spirit! Oh! Hagar is a chamois! you cannot expect her to trot demurely to the music of her own grunting, from trough to straw, like any pig! Hagar is an eagle! you must not look to find her waddling lazily and feeding fatly with barnyard ducks and geese."

"A pretty way to speak of your neighbors, Mr. May."

"Well, then, let them let Hagar alone! Mother!" said Gusty, drawing in his breath *hard* between his teeth, "the anger heats and swells in my heart like kindling fire in a bombshell, till it tears and splits and flashes, until I feel the fire and see the lightning, and some of these days it will explode and blow myself and some others up! when I hear these domestic animals sitting in sage judgment on my wild deer of the mountains! these barn-door poultry cackling their comments on my falcon sailing towards the sun! Pish! pshaw! tush! tut!" exclaimed Gusty, jumping up in a heat, and walking the floor.

"Pretty way to talk of your neighbors again, I say, Mr. May!"

"Well, then, let them let Hagar ALONE!" thundered Gusty, bringing his hand down on the table like a hammer on the anvil. "Beg your pardon, mother, I did not mean that *to* you, but *of* them; and if that old gander Gardiner Green don't make his goose and gosling stop cackling about Hagar, he'll get his neck twisted for him!"

Now Emily laughed—

"Poor Gardiner Green, it would be a sin and a shame to persecute him for what he has no hand in and can't help. Don't you know how he fears his wife?"

"Does—does he? very well, I'll meet fear with fear; he shall fear something else worse than his wife!"

"Now, very seriously, Augustus, you will afflict me very much, if you commit any folly for the sake of Hagar Churchill."

"But I love Hagar Churchill—love her! sympathize with her."

"She has no pity for herself, why should others pity her?"

"*Pity! pity!* did *I* say *pity*, mother? pity Hagar Churchill! *pity* that proud, free, glad spirit!"

"Yes, *pity her!* that 'proud, free, glad spirit' is clothed with woman's deep affections, prisoned in *woman's* fragile form, environed by woman's circumstances, and chafes against them all—would break through them all! will break through them all! and then, high as that proud spirit soars, though her wings should glance in the atmosphere around the sun's disk, she will be beaten back and down—*down!* Glad as that high heart throbs, it will yet beat sobs that throw out tears for blood! Wide as that wild spirit wanders, it will yet cower, moaning upon the waste hearth of home."

"Good God, mother, what makes you talk so? If I thought that, I would scale the eyrie of the eagle, and carry off Hagar to some sweet South sea summer isle, where she should reign another Queen Eve over another Eden."

"Are we to have any supper to-night, Emily?" sang out Mr. Buncombe from the parlor.

"Yes! I'm coming—think no more of this Hagar."

"But, mother," interrupted Gusty, "*why* do you have such dreadful forebodings for Hagar?"

"I judge her fate by herself, her future by her past and present, and I say that, unless Providence interposes to save her as by fire, Hagar's

Digitized by Google

fierce, strong spirit will break her own heart and destroy her own soul! Come to supper."

"Destroy her own soul—come to supper—that's a pretty brace of subjects to tie together, is it not now?" said Gusty.

It must not be supposed that Emily had any unfriendly feelings towards Hagar. She did not love Hagar less, but Gusty more. And acting like a sober, prudent mother, she did not choose to permit Gusty to marry a girl who was fully as much censured as admired in the neighborhood.

After supper she talked with him again, talked earnestly and for a long time, until Gusty rising, said,—

"Seriously, mother, you ask too much—too much of me; you, with your cool, temperate nature, cannot sympathize with my ardent heart. Alas! how should you?—you, who at eighteen could marry a man of sixty (no disrespect, mother—I venerate my sainted father's memory—I talk reason, but not disrespect)—you, I say, who could at eighteen wed a man of sixty, and be happy with him—you who at twenty-five, in your young widowhood, could keep a young lover waiting ten years, until your son grew up—you with your cheerful, serene temperament, how can you conceive my sufferings if severed from Hagar? My love for Hagar, if die it must, will die hard—dreadful will be its death-throes; but you, mother, how can your quiet heart conceive of this—sympathize with this?"

"A still heart is not always a *cold* heart, Gusty, or even a *quiet* heart. I have tamed my heart to the will of Providence—I have learned in His school, and thrown down in impatience no task that He has set me—rebelled against no discipline He has ordained for me; and my life has gone smoothly, pleasantly, happily. I have gained some calm wisdom; I am thirty-six years old, yet my face is as smooth, my eye as clear, my hair as black and moist as in girlhood. I have minded God for my father, and He has very gently led me up the steeps of life. Believe me, Gusty, it is our rebellion against Him that makes all our troubles. God's will is paramount, absolute, its end is our good, and He will keep us in our path if it be by 'a hedge of thorns;' seek to escape God's providence and in your struggle you break and bruise yourself, and lose your strength. If, in the words of Scripture, you 'kick against the pricks,' you will be wounded. It rests with us, Gusty, to go God's way willingly and pleasantly, or to go in it rebelliously and painfully, for go God's way we must. The further we stray from it the longer and more fearful will be the forced journey back to; it and the more we wrestle against God's laws and will, the more fatigued and bruised we will be, of course without the glory and the anguish of coming off victors. Now, Gusty, *my* faith in God was only lip-acknowledged, before a slight circumstance made it heartfelt. It was this:—You were an infant of six weeks old. You had a tumor rising under your ear. It grew very large and painful. When I had to dress it it put you in an agony, and you would struggle violently and look up into my face with an imploring, reproachful expression, as though you would inquire *why I* tortured you—*I* whom you depended upon and whom you loved, and who loved you—why *I*, your mother, tortured you. That was your expression—I read it plainly in your countenance, Gusty, and I wept at your silent reproach. Your father was standing by me, and he said, 'Emily, what is it?' I replied, 'I weep—I weep because this child cannot understand that I *must* do this—that I *pain* him to *cure* him.' But while I spoke, Gusty, darted down this truth into my heart-strings from Heaven. And so God, the pitiful father, wounds to heal His children, and would make them understand, but that they are querulous and still cry 'why, why suffering? since God has power and love?' Alas! we cannot understand, the dulness is ours, or we *must* not understand, for the probation is ours, for some reason that will one day be revealed. It may be not from the deficiency of God's power or will to reveal, but from a deficiency of our ability now to receive the revelation of the secret of suffering; and we wait or rebel—struggle against or reproach Providence for suffering, even as the tortured, writhing, and screaming child silently reproached its loving and grieving mother for her tender dressing of its tumor. God doeth all things well; that truth has calmed my heart, made my life serene and happy."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOVERS.

"A brow of beautiful, yet earnest thought,
A form of manly grace."—SIGOURNEY.

"That fearful love which trembles in the eyes,
And with a silent earthquake shakes the soul."
mm DRYDEN.

THEY sat under the shed of the piazza at Heath Hall—Raymond and Hagar—in the same piazza that had been the stage of so many scenes of selfishness, tyranny, and violence—of weak resistance, or of weaker compliance—across the floor of which the long shadow of Withers had been thrown as he passed in his ghostly wooing of Sophie; before the steps of which the pale wanderer had paused to warn in her flight towards death—through which the corpse of the sinner, sufferer, and suicide, had been borne to the inquest—in which the declaration of love and despairing parting had occurred between Sophie Churchill and Augustus Wilde—through which Raymond had flown to pick up Hagar, when in maniac violence Mr. Withers had hurled her through the open window—lastly, through which the corpse of the poor lunatic had been carried, the shadow seeming to pass from the house at the same time. All was very quiet now. It was Spring, and the moon was shining down through the trellis-work and vines, and the moonlight, agitated by the shadows of the leaves that quivered in the breeze, trembled on the floor. They sat together on the bench at one of the extremities of the piazza. Hagar sat erect—leaned back against the balustrade; her fingers were slightly clasped, and her fierce eyes burning into the opposite vines. Yet the wild girl was very gentle now; the brave girl timid; her venture was—not life and limb—that Hagar would at any time risk, with a kindling, not a

Digitized by Google

smouldering cheek; her venture was—her affections!—that heart, once so keenly sensitive—that heart which in infancy had been stung and embittered until it had at last grown stiff as any other muscle under the action of any other bitter tonic poison! that among the forest rocks and streams had grown so healthy! so joyous! It was such a free, brave, leaping heart, that its prison-chest would scarce contain it!—it would leap, though, and soar to the clouds!—it did send its owner on horseback bounding over awful chasms, leaping five-barred gates, thundering down frightful descents, and sing with gladness when the feat was done! But now this jubilant heart was slowly trembling like a balloon in its descent to earth, or a wounded bird that slowly flapping its wings falls, and falls. Its wild liberty was going—gone. Yes, her liberty of thought and action was gone; no one ventured to advise, to reprove, to oppose the young mistress of Heath Hall; yet she felt reproof, opposition, powerfully. There were no substantial fetters of steel or iron on her slender wrists and ankles, yet the fetters encircled her free limbs notwithstanding! Listen, dear reader, while I tell you how Hagar—queen of woods and waves—Hagar, *la lionnesse de chase*, discovered that though no one rebuked her by word, gesture, or glance, she was no longer her own mistress; that she had to contend for her freedom, not "with flesh and blood," but with powers and principalities of—something or other! There had been a high day at the Heath; under the auspices of Master Gusty May the hounds had met early. There had been a great chase, quite a steeple-chase; a neck-or-nothing affair; and all day long, over hill and dale, rock and brake, the hunting had thundered, and still Hagar, the slight agile girl, on her flying black steed, had kept the advance; and still, with wild mirth and fearless defiance, she had cheered them forward! down the most precipitous steeps, through the most violent torrents, over the most frightful chasms, until the brush was taken. The hunters dispersed, and many of them rode over to Heath Hall, in company with Gusty May and Hagar. And there when all lips were carelessly, mirthfully speaking of her feats of horsemanship that day, and the dark girl's cheek kindled more with the proud consciousness of power than with pleasure at their admiration, she sought Raymond's face. Raymond never joined these hunts, his tastes did not lie that way. She sought Raymond's countenance at the very moment that some one spoke of her leap across "Devil's Gorge." She sought Raymond's countenance half in doubt. He heard—she felt he did, although his eyes were fixed upon the book before him. He disapproved—she felt, with a strange pain, a strange sense of loss that he did, although no glance, gesture, or frown betrayed rebuke. And somehow, all Hagar's gladness escaped in a long drawn sigh! She felt not quite so much of a young lioness as she had a moment since; and the presence of the company annoyed her, and she wished from her soul that they would eat their suppers and go along home; she wished to hear Raymond speak to her alone, that she might know how much she had lost, and perchance recover it. Well, at last they did go, and Hagar, after, in the Maryland manner, seeing the last guest to the door herself, came back in her riding-habit, which she had not yet had time to change—she came back, that slight, dark girl, looking so elegant in her graceful black habit, her shining blue-black ringlets glittering down her crimson cheek; her gleaming eyes and teeth were veiled and covered, one by the purple lips, the other by the long black fringes; how gentle she seemed now, gentle as the half-dozing leopardess, with her tusks and claws covered with the softest fur. And she *was* gentle just now, she glided softly near Raymond and stood by him, so humbly! He did not see her attitude or expression as she stood a little behind and on one side of him, but he felt her there, turned softly, and passing his hand gently around her shoulders drew her down to his side. They were on the sofa between the two windows, and the light of the candles on the mantel-piece fell upon the picture—he drew her small and elegant head down upon his bosom with the radiant face turned towards him, and he gazed down on it as though his soul would escape through breath and glance, and die upon it. She could not meet those tender deep-blue eyes, fixed so earnestly on her face; her black eye-lashes fell upon her crimson cheeks, and her brow burned; he stooped till his golden curls mingled with her black ringlets, and pressed his lips to hers. Quickly she whirled her head from under his arm, but continued to sit by him; he was silent, thoughtful, while he held her hand and pressed it from time to time.

"Raymond!" at last she said. "Love!"

"What is the matter?"

"Why, dearest Raymond, you are grave, unusually grave—will you tell me the reason?"

"If my Hagar, in her deepest heart, is conscious of having given me cause for pain, is not that enough?"

The girl turned her glowing cheek and heaving bosom away from him; her heart was struggling violently with its chains, she did not speak for some time. At last he said—

"Have I offended you; have I wounded you, Hagar?"

"No—no—*neither*—you are too gentle and generous to do either, but I have hurt myself in your estimation."

He drew her to his bosom in the gentlest embrace, and bowed his soft cheek upon her face so slowly, tenderly; but she broke from his loving hold with a strangled sob and escaped to her eyrie. Yes, it was too true, her liberty was gone. The caress of love had riveted the chain of bondage about the maiden's will—the kiss of love had left the mark of ownership upon the maiden's cheek. Yes, the wild falcon was caught in the jesses. True, hers was the most gentle captor in the world, it was the gentleness that disarmed her, the tenderness that subdued her; still she *was* caught, disarmed, subdued, and she did not like it—she could have reproached her own heart as though it had been a traitor, sitting up before her. Why, she softly inquired of herself, why should Raymond's good or ill opinion bring *her* joy or pain who utterly defied all other opinion? She could not tell, she could neither break her fetters nor understand how they came to be riveted so fast—verily, she was like the young wild horse of the prairie struggling with the lasso around her neck, unknowing how it came there, unable to shake it off. This feature in love was new to her; this

Digitized by Google

subjugation of the will, this thorn in the rose, and it rankled not a little. She would do as she pleased, she said to herself. Sophie had never controlled her; Emily had never controlled her; and her horse's hoofs had naturally and very unconsciously spurned dust and defiance in the faces of those who had pursued her with blame. Now comes this power stealing into her bosom, and gently, so gently, yet so tightly, winding round and round her free heart, so that in its wild throbs it bruised itself against the pressure. Yes, she *would* do as she pleased; she would ride another hunt if only to convince herself that she might do so. And she did so; yet when flying over the moor or heath, when thundering down some declivity, or spurring her horse to some fearful leap, a hand of air would seem to fall upon her wrist arresting it, a voice of air fall on her ears forbidding her, and impatiently, like a young courser throwing up his head and champing the bit, she would shake off the hand and voice of air, and take the leap; but then—a pain would drop and sink heavily, more heavily, upon her spirits, weighing them utterly down—no more glad triumph! no more waving of the cap, or *if* the cap was waved it was in defiance of the heart sinking like a plumb-weight through the bosom. "I *will* do as I please," many times she would say to herself. "Well, who hinders you?" "herself," would say to her; "not Raymond, certainly, he never attempts such a thing, he only *suffers* when he sees you thus." So Hagar struggled against the power that was subduing her. It was when this struggle was nearly over that Hagar and Raymond sat in the piazza under the moonbeams, shining through the trellis work. Hagar, as I said, with her slight form erect, and her glittering eyes fixed upon the opposite end of the trellis. Raymond holding her small hand that quivered in his palm like the heart of a captured bird—Raymond with his graceful head bowed to catch her words.

"Not yet, dearest Raymond, not *just yet*."

"But, Hagar, love, *why*, what *now* hinders our marriage? Just see, dearest, how you have put me off! bethink you, from the time of my arrival at the Heath before my father's death, I began to love you, would have married you, my father wished particularly to unite us and bless our union before he died, but you, Hagar, came daily with your 'not yet' weekly, monthly; with your 'not yet' until the old man died without seeing the desire of his eyes. Was that kind, wild Hagar? Well! and since his death, you have said 'not yet, do not let us join our hands over a scarcely closed grave,' and I agreed with you. I took leave of you and returned to the charge of my preparatory school. A year passed, and procuring a substitute to take care of my school, I came again—again renewed my entreaty, and again Hagar with paling cheek insisted 'not yet,' and again I left the Hall alone. Believing, although you would not confess it, that your reluctance arose from an unwillingness to leave your native place, without consulting you I abandoned my business and came down here; here I have lingered weeks, and still Hagar pales and flushes and tells me 'not yet.' Now what am I to think of this, Hagar? *why* not yet, do you not love me, will not my love make you happy?"

Most tenderly he raised that little dark and fluttering hand to his lips, most gently he spoke as he said—

"Now, my Hagar, tell me why do you insist upon this delay?"

"Not insist, oh! not insist, Raymond—*plead*—I plead this delay—your love make me happy? oh! yes, *so* happy I am afraid to stir for fear of disturbing it. I feel like a dreamer who has fallen asleep in foreign lands, and dreams that he is standing in his own garden—afraid to stir lest I wake up—not yet, dear Raymond—do not let us wake yet, do not break this dream, dispel this illusion, spoil this love yet!"

"'Spoil this love,' why what do you mean by that, Hagar?"

"I mean that we are so happy as we are, Raymond—now that I have partly tamed my wild heart to your gentle hand—now that I no longer grieve or wound you, or ride steeplechases, or shock the neighborhood into electric life by some galvanic feat of desperation; now that I am winning 'golden opinions from all sorts of people,' and no longer mortifying you—why we are so happy, this is such a fairy-land, dream-like happiness. Think, we are under the same roof, sit daily at the same table, ride to church together every Sunday, visit together, read together, ramble together, my twin-brother," said she, suddenly yielding herself to his embrace with affectionate abandonment. "So we are *so* happy! alas! don't spoil it, don't let us become a humdrum Mr. and Mrs. Withers yet—a tobacco-planting, corn-growing, butter-churning Mr. and Mrs. Withers! don't! the very idea 'withers' my heart," and the wild girl, wild still! laughed like the explosion of a squib.

Raymond folded his long fair hands together and fell into thought; at last he said:

"Hagar, I have always heard, read, and dreamed much about the *confiding* love of woman, but I see little of it in you; how is this, Hagar?"

"Have I want of confidence—is it that? Perhaps it is," said the girl seriously. "I who neither fear to risk life, limb, nor good opinion; I fear, oh! how I *do* fear to lose the affection of one who loves me; I fear to be too much with them, to ask anything of them; I feel as though I would always rather serve them than receive service from them. Raymond, young as I am, I have already suffered so much from wounded sensibilities; I know you would not readily believe this, but oh! listen—the first thing I loved in this wide world was Sophie; the first thing I remember was sleeping on her bosom every night with her sweet breath on my cheek; I do suppose she spoiled me, I was always with her, she was devoted to me, absorbed in me, until a new enthusiasm seized her, and she—oh! but, Raymond, forgive me, I suppose it was all right, only I did not comprehend it, and when I was suddenly severed from Sophie, I wept all night, screamed all day, and then when she continued to neglect me, and when after the arrival of Rosalia, all the child spoilers in the house and in the neighborhood left me altogether, and clustered around Rosalia like bees around a clover blossom; well, Raymond! perhaps it was my nature after all, I took to the forest for my home, and to animals for my companions; I consoled myself at first for the want of affec-

Digitized by Google

tion; and, afterwards, I grew really independent of it! my heart was so high and strong, I did not care for love—not I! I loved others in a half contemptuous right royal way, but I asked no sort of return; indeed, I think, it would have annoyed me; but now, Raymond! now I love you, and I have your love, and I tremble—I tremble lest I lose *that* also; no heart has been steady to me, no human heart I mean, up to this time (it remains to be seen whether yours will be, Raymond)—no human heart, I said—my pointers, Remus and Romulus, have been, and dog-like always will be. Do you know, Raymond, by the way, why I called my two favorites Remus and Romulus?"

"I guess you thought, bitter girl, that the fate of the poor twins cast out to the wolf to be nursed was not unlike that of little Hagar rocked upon the tree tops."

"Yes, that was it."

"My dear Hagar, you must forget these things; it were unmerciful to remember them against my unhappy father, most cruel to remember them against dearest Sophie, whose mild life has been one offering for others."

"I do not remember them ever. I only recall them when forced to the recollection, and when I have to account to myself, or to you, for some strange trait foreign to a young girl's character, and then I recall them without bitterness as facts, not as injuries."

"Then, Hagar, love," said he, "I am now perfectly serious in what I am about to say, I must either marry you very soon or tear myself away from you. Hagar, through the influence of one of my father's old friends, I have been offered the situation of *attaché* to the new embassy to the Court of Madrid; they sail in three weeks from Brooklyn. Come, Hagar, shall I go?"

Hagar was silent.

"Listen, Hagar,—if I go it is probable I shall remain three or four years—shall I go?"

Hagar's eyes burned holes in the floor.

"Hagar, I am very weary of entreaty, hear me! I must either marry you or tear myself away from you! one or the other! and soon! Come! which shall I do, Hagar?"

"We are very happy as we are; remain with us, this is your home, stay, you shall have as much of my company as you wish, the more the better; I will give up all my out-door amusements when you cannot accompany me, I will do anything in the world to gratify you—except get married—oh, not yet."

He jumped up—it was strange to see the gentle and graceful Raymond exhibit so much emotion.

"'Not yet.' Oh! for heaven's sake do not ring the changes on those two odious syllables any longer, Hagar; I am getting restive under it."

Then he dropped down into his seat again with a sigh, saying,

"Bear with me; Hagar, it is not often that I lose patience, but indeed, my wild love, you are a trial! now hear me, Hagar. I shall write and accept that situation, I shall make preparations for my journey, and in two weeks from this night I shall leave Heath Hall to join the embassy that will sail in one week from that time. I shall, unless dearest Hagar in that time places her little hand in mine and trusts me with the care of her future happiness—well, Hagar?"

"Well, Raymond?"

"What have you to say to that?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"*Nothing.*"

"Ungentle! Unwomanly!"

"Perhaps *too* ungentle, *too* unwomanly to be able to make you happy, Raymond!"

"Hagar!"

"Well!"

"Mad girl! why do you act in this way?"

"What way? I beg you to remain with us; I promise you to do everything to make you happy, except marry you; and you should rest content, especially as I wish to marry no one else."

"But why? why?"

"Because I am afraid!—afraid!" said the girl.

And then she arose, and wishing him good night, hurried into the room. As she passed in, a pale figure intercepted her further progress—

"Gusty!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, 'Gusty!'"

"I did not know that you were here."

"I have been here for half an hour. I passed right through the piazza, but you and Raymond were too deeply engaged in conversation to hear me. Perceiving your absorption, I would not interrupt you; I came in here, and borne down with fatigue, and stunned with despair (for, Hagar, the first words of your conversation betrayed the state of affairs between you and Raymond) I threw myself upon the sofa and there I lay until I heard you arise and enter the house—don't be disturbed, Hagar, I only heard the few words as I passed through the piazza. I would not, you may be assured, have heard one word that I could have avoided hearing, and the words I heard were providential—they have been good for me, they have stunned, benumbed my senses into a sort of peace. Well, Hagar, when is it to come off?"

"What, Gusty?"

"You know—your marriage with Raymond!"

But Hagar, wafting him a good night, fled up the stairs to bed. And Gusty, to avoid Raymond, whom he had not the power just now to meet in a friendly manner, Gusty having ascertained that Sophie was not visible, slunk out through the back way and disappeared.

Days passed at Heath Hall, and Gusty was not seen. Raymond had written his letter of acceptance, had gone to Hagar's eyrie in the fourth story, and leaning over the back of her chair, had read it to her. She had heard it with little visible emotion.

"Now, Hagar, I am about to seal it. Tarquinius is mounted in the yard ready to take it to the post-office;—tell me, Hagar, shall I send it, or not?"

"Just as you please."

"Then I please *not* to send it on condition that you give me your hand."

"I cannot—yet I implore you to stay—do not leave us—I—I shall be very unhappy when you are gone."

"Marriage or flight, Hagar; those are my alternatives."

She said no more. He lingered.

Digitized by Google

"Shall I send the letter, Hagar?"

"As you please."

He took a wafer from her writing desk, and sealing the letter, directed it; then going to the window, he beckoned Tarquinius. The boy dismounted, and coming into the house ascended the long flight of stairs, and in time entered the room. Raymond looked at Hagar as he slowly gave the letter into the hands of the boy. Hagar did not offer to interfere. Tarquinius left the room, and five minutes after she saw him ride out of the yard, letter in hand. Their eyes met then; there was sadness in the expression of both—the sadness of reproach upon Raymond's face, the sadness of deprecation on Hagar's. Indeed either of them could have wept, but that Raymond for his manhood, and Hagar for that early in her brave childhood she had made a sort of silent pledge of total abstinence from tears, refrained. He left the room very soon.

Sophie entered it. She paced it in her soft, slow manner, and sinking down in one of the old leathern chairs by the window at which Hagar stood looking out upon the bay, she said—

"Hagar, my love, I have come to have a talk with you: my dear child, what is the matter between you and Raymond? why have you grieved and repulsed him again? and, if I am not very much mistaken, permitted him to make arrangements for that foreign mission?"

"Did he tell you that, Aunt Sophie?" said Hagar, turning around.

"Of course not, my love; I met him coming down, I saw his face overshadowed, and I had seen just before that, the superscription of the letter in the hand of Tarquinius; now, what is it all about? Trust me, Raymond looks distressed to death."

Hagar ran her slender, dark fingers, through her glittering blue-black ringlets, and looked down in perplexity into the soft brown eyes of Sophie, raised to hers with their old look of pleading love. Then turning her eyes quickly away, she looked from the window; she did not wish to speak upon the subject.

"You want a loving trust, Hagar," said Sophie, sadly.

"Perhaps I do," as sadly replied the girl.

"I never saw one so young as you with so little confidence, so little trust as you have—your distrust is more like a hardened man or woman of the world than a simple girl, a maiden not yet eighteen."

"But I am *not* a simple girl—love, hope, trust, faith, were crushed out of me while I was yet an infant, and you know it; or perhaps you do *not* know it, Sophie; though you had some hand in the work."

"Hagar, love! you afflict me—tell me what you mean by that?"

"Nothing! nothing!"

"Nay, tell me, Hagar! I must know the meaning of your sad words."

"Nothing! nothing! I will explain nothing! account for nothing! investigate, analyse nothing! I will accuse no one! I did not mean to hint at a wrong! I was betrayed into it!"

"This is growing very serious by your energy of manner, Hagar—have I injured you in any way?—my own dear child, do not turn away, but answer me."

"No, no; never lifted your finger, or raised your voice, to hurt me the least. Oh! nonsense, my dearest aunt! I am a scamp to make you sad—nothing! only *this*, that *my* experience has so schooled me, young as you think I am, that I am afraid to launch my happiness in the uncertain seas of other hearts."

"You want faith, Hagar. Ah! Hagar, I partly guess now what you mean; but if you had known how much I loved you, all the time you thought I was neglecting you! Have faith, Hagar. Good Heavens!" said she, speaking with unaccustomed energy, "have faith! the world could not go on without faith. There is a great deal of faith in the world—social faith, and commercial faith; political faith, and domestic faith, and Christian faith, which embraces all the others; but there is not faith enough anywhere—and you, Hagar, are deplorably deficient; cultivate that small speck of faith that is in your heart until it grows strong and gives you happiness. You *cannot* live without faith—with it you have all things, without it you have nothing. Have faith first in God, in His wisdom, goodness, power, and love, in His all-surrounding con"—

"Oh, I do! you know I do, Sophie, and all the sin and suffering I see on earth does not in the least shake my faith in God—but—"

"But you have little or no faith in your fellow-creatures; cultivate that little then, Hagar. Oh! trust, and its opposite, mistrust, how powerful they are; the one for evil, the other for good. Trust! why, Hagar, it is the moral philosopher's stone, that transmutes, not base metals to gold, but better, evil to good. Believe me; I think, Hagar, the story of the philosopher's stone was an allegory, and meant this same faith. Why faith will convert the unfaithful by the very appeal it makes to their better nature. Faith plunges straight through all that is ill in a heart, and seizes on that which is good, though half smothered in sin, brings it out into life and action, cherishes it until it is strong and able to struggle with and perhaps to overcome the evil. Why, Hagar, just take a case: suppose a person whose interests are jostled with yours in the conflict of this world becomes your opponent, seems your enemy, gives you a great deal of trouble, perhaps works you much woe in one way or another, yet have faith in *him*, believe that *his* heart is not *all* selfishness, nor treat it as though it were; believe that in that soul watches a *conscience* that speaks for you, if it could be heard; in that heart a *human sympathy* that still suffers for you, if it could be felt; a spark of divine and human love, in a word, that, however covered up and crusted over by sin and selfishness, still lives, may still be nursed into a healthful and regenerating flame by your love. Have faith in the human feeling, even of the selfish. Believe that somewhere down in the deeps of their souls, buried though it be, there lives some good that *your* goodness might elicit; some love that *your* love might arouse; some faith that *your* faith might sustain; some conscience that your forbearance or forgiveness may awaken. And on the other hand, Hagar, mistrust of good, doubt of good, how fraught with evil it is; doubt chains the sinner to his sin, keeps the weak man on his couch of weakness. Trust is health, life; mistrust is illness, death."

Digitized by Google

"But, aunt, if you had been robbed by a person, for instance, would you trust that person with your purse?"

"I do not mean superficial trust," said Sophie; "no, perhaps I would not leave my purse in the way of a proved thief, unless I had some guarantee of his reformation; but I would have *trust* in *his capabilities for reformation*, and I would run some risk of loss, if necessary, in advancing his reformation."

They were silent some time. Then Hagar said—

"But you are mistaken, Sophie, if you think that I doubt or mistrust Raymond; it is not exactly that, it is a vague, undefined fear—dread."

"It is the same thing, arises from the same thing, Hagar; but conquer it, my dear. Come, Hagar, you love Raymond—long months ago you promised him your hand—you were miserable whenever he left the Hall, even for his northern school; you will be wretched when once he has left the shores of the United States—you will nearly die. I know something of that despair, Hagar," said she, trembling; then suddenly stopped, as though frightened at her own words.

"You, Sophie; why, who ever left you?"

"Hush, my love, hush!" said Sophie, growing very pale.

"Ah!" thought Hagar to herself, "see how she loved *Rosalia*."

"Come, Hagar, let me recall Raymond—he loves you, he deserves you—come, Hagar," said Sophie, laying her hand on the dark girl's arm and looking up into her face pleadingly, as though *she* were the child, and Hagar the woman. But the girl shook her head; that last incident in the conversation, as she understood it, was not a propitious one.

A few days rapidly slid away, and the morning of Raymond's departure arrived. It was a very rainy day. His trunks had been corded, and were carried down to the beach, to await the passing of the packet in which he was to sail.

Breakfast was over; and Sophie, Hagar, and Raymond, standing at the window that overlooked the bay. Raymond held a spy-glass in his hand, which Hagar would sometimes take from him and level at a distant object, and Raymond would watch, momentarily hoping, expecting, that she would drop a whisper, even at this last moment, and say, "Stay, Raymond." But she did not. He thought her fingers quivered slightly as she returned him the spy-glass, and that her voice faltered as she said, "There is the vessel in sight, Raymond; look and see if it be not."

It was the packet.

"Now she will relent," he said to himself.

The packet bore rapidly down the bay.

"Good-by, dearest Sophie, *petite belle mère*," said he, drawing Sophie to his bosom, and kissing her brow with an assumption of gay indifference.

"God bless and prosper you, Raymond—God send you back to us, healthful in body, soul, and spirit—good-by, poor, dear Raymond—I am so sorry you are going again!" and Sophie sank down in the corner of the sofa, bowed her head, and sobbed.

"Now she *will* relent," smiled Raymond to himself, as he went to Hagar, held out his arms, and said, "Farewell, love! farewell, dear, hard Hagar!"

"I am going down to the beach with you," said she.

And then Raymond smiled more to himself, and again pressing the hand of the weeping Sophie, he drew Hagar's arm within his own, and left the house. Hagar had thrown a large cloak over her head and shoulders, and Raymond hoisted a large umbrella—Tarquinius Superbus strutting before them with his arms full of small packets, &c. They arrived at the beach—stood upon the sand, with the rain pouring down from above, and the tide hurrying against their feet below as the boat from the packet was rowed towards them. He turned and looked in her face—all its expression was turned inwards, it was so pale, cold, blank. "*Ah! I said so*," thought Raymond, "relenting little queen!" He could not take a lover's leave of her there—not before the rough boatmen, who were devouring them with their eyes—but he took her hand and pressed it; oh! it was so cold and clammy! pressed it to his lips—

"Farewell, dear Hagar!"

No answer.

"Good-by, Hagar. Do you hear me? I say, farewell!"

"Yes! Good-by!" said she, almost wildly.

"Well, it is *indeed* good-by, then, Hagar?"

"Yes! Good-by!" gulped Hagar.

He was disappointed—oh! how deeply—he stooped, however, and said—

"Hagar, I did not think that you would have held out so firmly thus long; now! quick! in mercy to me—in mercy to yourself—tell me to stay—it is not too late—put your hand in mine—that will be enough!"

Hagar withdrew both hands.

"Boat waitin', zur!" now broke in the hoarse voice of the waterman.

"Well, Hagar? Well?"

"Good-by!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes! Good-by!"

He caught her—he could not help it then—he strained her to his bosom, and kissed her—the boatmen might laugh, he did not see them—and tore himself away, stepped into the skiff, and was rowed to the packet. Soon the packet had resumed its course down the bay; and the rain poured down as she stood there, with Tarquinius holding the umbrella over her head. How pale, and cold, and still she stood, with all the fire of her temperament concentrated in her gaze, which burned upon the sails of the receding packet, until it was lost, even to her falcon glance, while the rain poured down around her, and the waves washed up to her. At last, "just to see the obstinacy of men!" she said; and turning, wandered listlessly home.

The packet wended its way down the bay, it was bound for the port of New York; the weather was bad, and grew worse; contrary winds kept it back, and it was many days longer than usual on the voyage. At last it anchored in the port of New York. Raymond went to a hotel and called for paper, pen, and ink, with

Digitized by Google

which to write to his friends at Churchill Point. Having finished his letters, he took them to the Post-Office, and after mailing them, ran his eye down the published list of letters, as if by hundredth hazard his name might be there. It was not. Indeed he did not expect to see it. It was an idle thing, he thought, but still he would ask the clerk if there was a letter there for him.

"*What* name, sir?"

"Raymond Withers."

"Here is your letter, sir, came in this morning's mail."

He seized the letter—just as you seized *that* letter of yours, you know, reader. It—Raymond's letter, and not yours—was from Sophie, and ran thus—

"Come home, dear Raymond. Hagar has been nearly delirious since you have been gone, yet I believe she would expire before she would recall you herself; however, come home; I will engage to say that we will have a bright little wedding at Heath Hall, yet; indeed, so certain am I of that fact, that I have engaged extra assistance, and have commenced preparations."

The other part was in a different hand—a dear, familiar, light, airy hand, that seemed to skim, scarce touching the paper; it ran thus—

"I have come to Sophie's writing-desk, and read over her shoulder what she has just written—I, too, say—Come home, Raymond!—I place my 'little hand' in yours."

In ten minutes Raymond had written an answer, being an *avant courier* of himself; in ten more he had penned a letter of resignation of his appointment; and in an hour he had removed his baggage from the packet to another bound by the bay to Baltimore *viâ* Churchill Point.

Just a week after sailing from New York, and three weeks from the date of his leaving Churchill Point, Raymond stepped from a boat upon the beach under the promontory, and as true as you live, reader, it was pouring rain just as fast as it rained upon the day of his departure. And there stood a slight dark girl, muffled in a black cloak, and behind her, with the whites of his eyes and teeth conspicuous, stood Tarquinius Superbus, holding an umbrella over her. It seemed to Raymond that he had only dozed a minute, and dreamed the last three weeks. He was by her side in an instant, had pressed her hand and drawn it through his arm, and walking on with her was bending forward and downward, looking into her dark and sparkling face with an expression, half affection, half triumph, on his superb brow and beautiful lips; but the mirth sparkling up from Hagar's face defied him.

"Do you know—does your little highness happen to know, Princess Hagar, what inconvenience you have put me to—what an agreeable three weeks I have passed—two weeks confined in the close cabin of a little sea-tossed packet, drenched with rain and beset with easterly winds which were of course contrary; then one week's voyage back, in weather a little worse than the other, except that the wind was favorable; to say nothing of the seeming folly of resigning my appointment at the moment the embassy was to sail. You have inconvenienced the administration also, Hagar! think of their having to *improvise* a successor for me at the last moment."

"But who would have thought that you would have been so stubborn?" laughed Hagar.

"Stubborn! it was *you* who were stubborn, Hagar. Good heavens! I never encountered such a will in my life!"

"I could not have believed that you would have gone!"

"I could not have believed that you would have suffered me to go."

"But I expected you to give up."

"And I wished you to yield. Where is that boy? Where is Tarquinius? Oh, immediately behind us; I thought so. Come, Tarquinius! come, Superbus! hurry home and get tea in—you waited tea for me, Hagar?"

"Oh, of course."

Tarquinius toiled with all his might and main ahead; but hurrying home, up that steep, slippery cliff, was not such sure and expeditious work, and Tarquinius kept near them perforce, while poor Raymond, still bending forward, looked down into Hagar's liquid eyes and lips, like Tantalus looked at the spring that was sparkling, leaping, and laughing invitation and defiance in his face.

"*Oh-h!*" groaned and smiled Raymond.

"Are you tired?" questioned Hagar, maliciously.

"No, you monkey."

"I am afraid you are," said Hagar.

In reply to which Raymond stooped down, and lifting her lightly in his arms, ran up the steep with her, and set her down upon the top, then smilingly drew her arm again within his own, and they went to the house. How cheerfully the fire-light and the candle-light glowed from the two windows under the shed of the piazza!

"I love to see a light within the house at night so much!" said Raymond, "and I like it better even in cities than in the country—it looks so very cheerful; and then to go through long streets at night, in which the houses are closed up from top to bottom, and you only guess life within through a chink in the shutter—it has to me the most ungenial, unsocial, selfish look in the world. I always kept the windows of my lodgings open until I went to bed, would you believe it of me, Hagar, just to add a little to the cheerfulness of our dark back street."

Sophie came out to meet them smiling, with her brown eyes looking so loving, and conducted them in.

Raymond had changed his clothes, and tea was over, and they gathered around the fire, Sophie with her needle-work, Hagar, the idle one, with a spiteful black kitten on her lap, whose antics amused her, and distressed Remus and Romulus, who were *couchant* at her feet

"I love a chill, rainy evening just at this season of the year," said Sophie, "because it makes it necessary to have a fire, and to gather around it with our work."

And then Raymond, smiling, drew from his pocket a book.

"What is it, Raymond?" exclaimed both ladies in a breath,—(those were not the days of cheap literature, reader, nor was that the neighborhood)—in those days, and in that country, all "books" were "books." "What is it, Raymond?"

And Raymond turned the back, and held it to them.

Digitized by Google

Both read in a breath—"Childe Harold,"—and both exclaimed in a breath, "Read to us, Raymond."

And Raymond opened the book, while Hagar pulled her kitten's ear, and made it spit and bite, and Sophie counted the stitches of her knitting, and commenced reading, and there we will leave them for the present.

CHAPTER XXI.

HAGAR'S BRIDAL.

'Bride, upon thy marriage day,
Did the fluttering of thy breath
Speak of joy or woe beneath?
And the hue that went and came
O'er thy cheek like wavering flame,
Flowed that crimson from the unrest
Or the gladness of thy breast?'

HEMANS.

Poor Gusty had walked about several days in a stupor, "stunned by a sockdologer," he said, into a stupor from which nothing could arouse him; he longed for the time when he should be ordered to sea, but alas! that time was very distant yet, he feared. He had never been at the Hall since what he called "that fatal evening." Emily was happy that an end was put to his hopes of Hagar at any cost of present pain to him.

"Gusty," said she one morning, "do you know Hagar is to be married week after next?"

"Yes, mother."

"Do you know that Sophie wants very much to get Rosalia home to the wedding?"

"Does she?"

"Yes—but unluckily no one seems to be travelling down in this direction from the neighborhood of her school, so that she cannot get an escort; Sophie cannot leave home to go after her, and she has no one she can send."

"Let me go! I carried her to school, you know; let me go and bring her home!" exclaimed Gusty, jumping up, very glad of a job that would stir his blood into a little circulation.

"Then as soon as dinner, which is just ready, is over, go to Heath Hall, and offer your services to Mrs. Withers, Mr. May. God bless this poor boy!" said she, taking his head between her hands, "he thinks his sun has set, and left his world in darkness, and he thinks that his life is made a 'howling wilderness,' and he thinks a great many horrible poetical things besides, and he has a slight suspicion that if he could put all that he feels upon paper, he would make a great poet. Well, now, let me advise you to improve the time, master poet; it will be short—write while the fire is blazing in the heart, and the brain boiling over it like a pot—do, Gusty, for presently the fire will all be out, and the brain quiet, and the clouds will clear away from your sky, and the sun will rise upon your stormy night and convert it into a very humdrum forenoon, unsuggestive of anything but dinner."

Sophie and Hagar were in conversation together in the chamber of the former, as Gusty rode into the yard. Sophie was trimming the white satin boddice of a beautiful dress that lay over the bed.

"And now I shall not wear that!" said Hagar. "I do not like it, it does not suit me. I shall feel in borrowed plumes if I wear that; it no more suits me than the white feathers of the dove would suit the kite."

"But, Hagar, my love, you would not wear anything else than white, would you? I never heard of a bride, a young bride, wearing colors in her bride dress."

"But *I* shall—I shall wear a black lace dress."

"Black! mercy, Hagar, you would make yourself so conspicuous, you would shock the whole neighborhood!"

Hagar laughed wildly, "You know very well that *that* is my besetting sin, Sophie; when this inane neighborhood is falling into an apathy, I feel a propensity to shock it into a little life!"

"Oh! you will think more rationally of this, I know it, for I know you would not willingly shock Raymond—but tell me, does he seriously intend writing to Dr. Otterback to come down?"

"Very seriously, for he *has* gone to his room for that purpose now. You see, dear Sophie, that I wished it myself. I am like that poor fellow who was hanged at Churchill Point a year ago; who, you recollect, would not receive the services of a Jack Ketch in the arrangement of his toilet, but insisted that the high sheriff should officiate, exclaiming, with an expiring flash of self-respect, 'If I *am* to be hanged, I'll be hanged by a gentleman!'* Now if a halter must be tied about my neck it shall be tied by a bishop!"

The girl's manner was full of wild gaiety. Sophie gently rebuked her for speaking of sad and grave subjects with wanton lightness. But the girl's eyes flashed more mirth and fire than before, as she said—

"Dear Sophie, how can you expect of me pity for others who have now none at all for myself—when I have made up my mind to be hanged or married I can do it; if hanging were the dish, I should not think of the horror, the agony, the death—my mind would leap straight through that dark, quick passage to the light! the joy! the immortality!"

"Oh, Hagar! and you say that not reverently, but triumphantly! oh, Hagar! what a heart you have to break down. A young bit of a maiden, yet with no gentleness, no tenderness, no sympathy—a little, slight, dark creature, yet with the fire, courage, and fierceness of a young panther. Oh! Hagar, how much I fear for you!"

Just at this moment a light rap was heard at the door; Sophie arose and opened it. It was a servant come to say that Mr. May was below stairs and requested to see Mrs. Withers. Sophie followed the messenger. She found Gusty waiting in the parlor. Sophie was not unacquainted with the secret that the poor fellow's despair had betrayed to all his friends, but this was the first time, be it remembered, that he had visited the Hall since the destruction of his hopes. Sophie's manner was unusually gentle and affectionate to him, so much so that poor Gusty

* A fact.

Digitized by Google

whose heart was sadly suffering for sympathy, said to her suddenly at the close of their interview, and after all the arrangements relative to his mission had been agreed upon,

"How much older are you than I, Sophie?"

"Eight years," answered Sophie, opening her large eyes. "Why?"

"Nothing—it is too much, I suppose! but may be it is not, as I am sure I am a great deal taller and twice as broad shouldered, and sun-burnt and all that, so that I am sure I must look as old as you?"

"What are you thinking of, Gusty?"

"Be hanged if you do look more than a very gentle little girl after all, not half so self-sustained and womanly as Hagar!"

"Why, Gusty?"

"I mean, Sophie, will you marry me? I am very steady of my years—all to taking care of mother—and I shall behave myself better than you think for, indeed I shall."

"Why, Gusty!"

"Sophie, you'll think it strange after all that phrensy of mine for Hagar, that I now offer you my hand, a boy's hand; but, Sophie, I always *did* love you and like to stay with you, and now that Hagar has thrown me away, I feel weak, suffering, as if I wanted some one to love me protectingly, to nurse me, to pet me—you are the very one, Sophie! I am so lonesome, so miserable, feel so unnecessary in the world. I am first person singular, nominative case to nothing under the sun just now! I want some one to love so much! some dear gentle girl that will love me with all her heart and soul, and not feel jealous of this anguish I must suffer for the loss of Hagar. Come, Sophie, pity me—my manhood, strength, spirit, impetuosity is all melting out of me. I feel like a poor dog that has no owner!"

"Your mother, Gusty."

"Oh! mother, has not she a husband, as well as Hagar a lover? Come, Sophie, you spent the first years of your youth in nursing a sick brain—spend the rest in nursing a sick heart—love me, Sophie. Oh, if you knew how I suffered, you would love me," and Gusty fairly dropped his head down upon Sophie's shoulder and *almost* wept. She let it lie there—nay she caressed that young grief-bowed head, as she said,

"I always have loved you, Gusty, and always shall, and will do anything in the world I can to make you happy."

"Thank you, dear Sophie. I thought you were too good to be proud because you happened to be the eldest; now, Sophie, how long will it be first, for I want to live with you, and lay my head upon your little shoulder, just so, while I talk to you of my troubles and you soothe me—when shall it be, Sophie?"

"What be, Gusty?"

"Our wedding!"

"Nonsense, dear Gusty, *never*. You are mad to think of such a thing, Gusty!"

"Then you won't."

"Certainly not—you were never surely serious in such a strange proposition! no, of course you were not! I was silly to give you a serious reply!"

"As the Lord in Heaven hears me, I am serious—I must be loved—love me, Sophie."

"I *do* love you, and *will* love you, how can I help it? but as to marrying you, Gusty! nonsense! Why, see here, when I was a little girl of eight years old, you were a babe of a few weeks, and I used to carry you in my arms all over the house, and have helped to nurse and educate you from infancy up, at least you knew I did until of late years," said Sophie, correcting herself; "now do you feel as if you still would like to marry your nurse, your little mother?"

Gusty was silent.

"No, Gusty, you will get over this in a few days, you will see some one else. I know by your professions to me that it is not *love*, but the *want* of love, that makes you miserable—your journey will help your cheerfulness, too. You must set out to-morrow."

He took his hat and riding-whip to go.

"Sophie, won't you come over to mother's and spend the evening this evening?—do, Sophie, it is lonesome over there, and mother and yourself can talk over the hundred thousand subjects of interest you have in hand."

"Yes, I will come, Gusty."

"Don't bring Hagar!"

"No."

"And, Sophie, mind, don't let mother know what a fool I have been making myself."

"Oh, no!" smiled Sophie, and the interview closed.

Gusty had to call at Churchill's Point, it was mail-day; and Gusty, though his correspondence was far from extensive, always made a point of being present at the opening of the mail.

"Here is a letter for your ma, Mr. May," said the little old widow, who was post-mistress for Churchill Point.

"From my Uncle Augustus," exclaimed Gusty, as he received it, "post-marked Boston—ha! his ship is in port—wonder when he is coming down." So musing, Gusty quickened his horse's pace, and rode on towards the cottage.

"A letter from uncle, mother," said he, as he laid it on the stand by her side, "and Sophie has accepted my escort for her niece, and I am to set off in the morning. Sophie will be here with us to tea."

Emily nodded and nodded assent to everything he said, though she heard not half while devouring her brother's letter.

"How is he—what does he say, mother?" exclaimed Gusty, when she had finished reading.

"He will visit us soon—he is going to be married."

"Mar—married!"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"To a young lady, he says, whom he has known for a long time, and who has his warmest affections and his highest respect."

"He married, too! well everybody gets married but me—lend me the letter, mother, let me see all about it," and she handed him the letter. While he was reading the letter, Emily looked out, and exclaimed:—

"There is Sophie now! go and help her from her saddle, Gusty!" and Gusty went. Emily followed more at leisure, and received her friend with her accustomed affection, whispering in confidence, "I have made a cream cake for your tea, darling," and led her in, took off her bonnet, and seated her near the pleasant-

Digitized by Google

est window. When she had carried away her things, and returned, sitting by her, she said suddenly, in the midst of a gossipping conversation:—

"But, Sophie, you never ask me after my brother Augustus!"

"Don't I?" said Sophie, faintly.

"Why, *no*, you know you don't—what ever can be the reason?"

"How is he—have you a letter?"

"Ah! exactly—'how is he,' when I have reminded you to ask."

"Forgive my forgetfulness, Emily."

"His ship has returned, did you know it?"

"No," said Sophie softly.

"Well, it *has*. Came in port nine days since—he is coming down to visit us very soon—how long has it been since you saw him, Sophie?"

"I don't know," answered Sophie reservedly.

"Let's see, I can tell, he has only been here three times since, and that was while you were so taken up, that you never came near us—let's see, it will be exactly eight years next Tuesday week since you met, and next Tuesday week I am to give a party to our bride, Hagar. He will be here on that day, and I fancy there will be another bride. Why, Sophie, what a color you have this evening—he is going to be married, and will probably bring his wife down—no, Sophie, it must have been the reflection of the sunset, for now I see you are quite pale, paler than usual—are you sick?"

"Oh! no, no."

"A little fatigued, I suppose. (Gusty rang for tea.) Yes! a young lady to whom he has long been attached—she's fainted. I wonder when Sophie will ever have any nerves?"

"How easily she swoons! Sophie never *was* strong," exclaimed Emily, as she raised and set her back, reached a tumbler of water, and bathed her temples. As Sophie opened her eyes she met those of Emily, looking kindly, sweetly, and with a new expression, into hers. "How do you feel, love?" was Emily's first question.

"Better."

"What made you faint? was it fatigue?"

I once told you, reader, of Sophie's deep veneration for truth, that would never permit her even to prevaricate. She was silent, and Emily looking again into her eyes, refrained from asking her any more questions, but smiled to herself, as in a few minutes she said to Sophie:—

"Now, my love, I have got to answer my brother's letter by return-mail; will you excuse me? I will not leave your side, but draw the stand to me, and write it here; it will not occupy me more than fifteen minutes." She drew her writing-desk before her, and, selecting her paper, commenced writing, while Kitty brought in the tea-things. At last, looking up from her work, she said:—

"I have told Augustus that you are sitting by my side while I write; now what shall I tell him from *you?*" Sophie was still silent. "Come, Sophie!"

"Give him my respects."

"Fiddle-sticks! why did you not send your *duty* at once, like a school-girl to her papa? your respects!" but then she looked at Sophie and saw her still so pale, so tremulous, that she turned and quietly resumed her writing.

If you had been looking over her shoulder, you might have read the following lines:

"Dearest brother—dearest Augustus—welcome! first to your native shores, and then soon, very soon, I hope, to your sister's home and bosom. Now concerning the subject of your letter, I must write cautiously, as I perceive that *you* recollected to do—because our worthy old post-mistress takes the liberty of peeping in at the ends of all private and confidential letters that pass and repass through her hands.* She will get something indigestible if she pries into this; no matter for her! About this other affair—yes, come! I have no *doubt* of it, *never* have had from first to last, though nothing in her manner, no look, word, or gesture, ever revealed the fact to me until this afternoon; nay, I believe the poor thing was unconscious herself, for you know I think she is one of the excellent of the earth, one of God's peculiar favorites; and through all these dark days I always had a faith in her eventual happiness even in this world, for the promise, Augustus, is both for *this* world and the next; hear it, 'Godliness is profitable unto *all things*, having the promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come;' and listen again! for I don't think that you attend to these things as much as you ought to: 'No man hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, that shall not receive manifold more in this *present time*, and in the world to come life everlasting;' and *her* martyrdom, poor girl, was so sincere, however mistaken—so sincere and complete, for she thought it for life! It was all rayless darkness to her; the future illumined only by her christian love and faith. And she is so beautiful, Augustus; so much more beautiful now at twenty-five, than she was at seventeen, when you saw her last; her health and spirits have suffered somewhat, but that has only lent the inexpressible charm of delicacy and pensiveness to her beauty. I rejoice in you both, Augustus! I rejoice in you both, and I bless you from my full heart! I rejoice in the 'more than Roman virtue' with which you died to each other, fully believing it eternal separation—with which you ever sternly wrested your thoughts from the other. I, the friend of both, have never once been made the medium of the slightest communication, the slightest inquiry or message such as acquaintances might interchange. You *died* to each other, believing it for ever, and that was right. But *this* is not right; it is not right that you should bind me to secresy about the subject of this letter, upon the ground that you do not know the state of her mind, or how she might receive it. Come and see for yourself—and even now she is looking up at me with her patient brown eyes, and believing— Heaven forgive me!—no matter. Come soon.

"EMILY."

"Please, madam! the tea will get cold," exclaimed Kitty, and Emily hastily sealed and directed her letter, and they sat down to the table.

The wedding-day of Hagar aud Raymond dawned. They were anxiously awaiting the packet, which they expected would bring Rosalia and Gusty, and perhaps, also, Dr. Otterback, who was to come down from Baltimore. Afternoon came, and Hagar, trying girl! instead of secluding herself in the mystery of her own room until it was time to dress, Hagar was down on the beach with a telescope, watching the approach of a distant vessel. While she was intently gazing, she felt her arm twitched, and looking back saw Blanche Rogers, who had been domesticated for several days at the Hall, employed in assisting Sophie with the bridal millinery and confectionery.

"Come, you torment! Come, you trial! it is time to dress! *time!*—high time! both rooms are full of company; and now I shall have to steal you into the house through the back way! Come!"

* Fact of a good old post-mistress in —— county, Maryland, to my own serious discomfiture.

Digitized by Google

Blanche Rogers was fully her equal in social position, besides being several years older than Hagar, yet not for this would the wild, proud girl, permit the familiarity of her address—lowering her telescope, she said with spirit,—

"The evening dews are chill, Miss Rogers; perhaps you had better not expose yourself to their influence, as you are not so well accustomed to them as myself. *I* watch the approach of yonder packet, and must see whether it contain passengers for the Hall, before I leave the beach."

"Yes, but my little self-willed, headstrong bride, it is *late;* the company are assembled; we have determined not to await the arrival of the bishop, or of the laggards, Rose and Gusty; we have settled that the ceremony shall proceed; we cannot wait much longer for anybody."

"I rather think you will have to wait some time longer for the bride!" said the girl, "unless, indeed, you could fancy the 'tragedy of Hamlet, with the part of the Prince of Denmark omitted.'"

"But, oh! Hagar, this is shocking!"

"Is it? So much the better; you need to be shocked!"

While they spoke, the vessel bore down rapidly towards the point—stopped—a boat was put out and rowed towards the beach, and old Dr. Otterback alone stepped upon the sand. The old man came smilingly forward, rubbing his hands and holding them out. Blanche stepped forward to welcome him.

"Hey, Miss—Miss ——, I remember you, you monkey, though I don't remember your name, or know if you have changed it."

"Miss Rogers!"

"Miss—*what!* not married yet?"

"La! no, Dr. Otterback, I was waiting for *you!* Ain't you a single man? You looked so much at your ease, I really thought you were, anyhow?"

"And you would put me out of my ease, hey? No, I'll tell you the reason you are not married; the young men are afraid of you, that is it."

"Not so, Dr. Otterback; I have twelve beaux, but I should be afraid to marry one of them for fear that eleven of them would hang themselves."

"*Twelve* would hang themselves, my lady, you may be sure of that! But, this is Miss Churchill, if I am not mistaken," said he, going up to Hagar.

Hagar curtsied, blushed with all her spirit; she was embarrassed, abashed, as well as much disappointed. This meeting Dr. Otterback alone, under such circumstances, was not what she had anticipated; not what it would have been, covered with the shower of welcomes that would have attended the reception of the *whole party*, had Gusty and Rosalia been with him. One thing, however, if Dr. Otterback recognised her as the bride of the evening, he did not appear to do so. They reached the Hall. The whole yard and surrounding grounds of the Hall were filled with carriages tied to the trees. Hagar reached her room without encountering any of the guests—though as she passed up the long wide stair-case, and through the passages, she could hear the half-suppressed hum of voices in the bed-rooms; the hushed voices of ladies who had arrived late and were re-arranging their toilet after their ride.

Hagar did *not* wear the threatened black lace dress; she wore just what she should have worn, just what, with little variety, *all* brides wear; viz. a white Mechlin lace over white satin; pearls on her arms and neck, and a wreath of orange blossom-buds twined irregularly in and out among her glittering blue-black tresses. But she was the most fidgety little bride you ever saw; her bosom rose and fell convulsively, and her little dark fingers twirled and twitched spasmodically, as the party stood before the bishop, in the midst of the assembled company; and more than once Raymond's soft hand pressure and reassuring whisper were needed.

It was over. Sophie lifted the veil from her head and whispered very softly,

"God bless you, my own dear child, my foster child, my nursling. God make you happy."

And then Hagar's wild eyes flew off from Sophie's face to light on Raymond's countenance, to meet his eyes; and then her expression changed—tragedy and comedy, deep joy, foreboding fear, comic humor and earnest affection were blended in the blushing and sparkling face she raised to meet his self-possessed and loving smile. It was strange, queer—a few words had been pattered over by a fat old gentleman in a gown; and, lo! all their relations were changed. It was curious; her very name and title were gone, and the girl, two minutes since a wild, free maiden, was now little better than a bondwoman; and the gentle youth who two minutes since might have sued humbly to raise the tips of her little dark fingers to his lips, was now invested with a life-long authority over her. Yes, it *was so* curious! and the spirited girl was in doubt whether to laugh or cry; and the expression of mingled emotions on her face blended into one of intense interest and inquiry as she met his gaze and smile, which she could not help fancying *patronizing and condescending*, as well as protective and loving! A new, extremely provoking feature in his smile! but perhaps she only fancied it. But this new relation, this new position, this new owning and being owned—it was very unique! very piquant! and Hagar felt it so! and her wild dark face gleamed and sparkled more and more all the evening; and every once in a while she would furtively look at Raymond as though he had been suddenly metamorphosed into something very awful; and if Raymond caught her stolen glance at such a time, her face and neck would be dyed with crimson.

I do not mean to weary you with a description of this wedding, nor tell you how the chambers of Heath Hall were crowded with guests that night, nor how old Cumbo fretted and fumed over the preparation of the state dinner the next day; nor how the dancing party came off in the evening; nor how disappointed Sophie was at the still prolonged absence of Rosalia and Gusty; nor how her thoughts occasionally wandered—but I will not even hint at *that*. None of these things will I trouble you with—but come to the Tuesday upon which Mrs. Buncombe was to give her sober, clerical-like evening party to the newly married pair—premising that Rosalia and Gusty had not yet arrived. It was a beautiful evening, and our party from Heath Hall rode over to Grove Cottage by moonlight.

Digitized by Google

Emily's rooms were well lighted and well filled —and Emily herself, with her quiet gaiety moving about, diffusing cheerfulness around. The bridal party, as usual there, sat at the extremity of the room opposite the entrance. Sophie sat with them; her small soft hands folded lovingly together on the lap of her brown satin dress, and her large eyes bent in reverie upon them. Very far from the scene must her thoughts have wandered, as she did not hear the slight agitation around the front door of the room, or see the entrance of an officer in the full dress uniform of a captain in the United States Navy, who, conducted by Emily, approached, bowing and smiling recognition on either side; she did not even look up until a light finger dropped softly on her hand, and she raised her large eyes to behold Emily, and—

"My brother, Captain Wilde, United States Navy—Mrs. Withers!" said Emily, presenting him with mock gravity. And Sophie mechanically arose, curtsied, and sank into her seat again, as though she had never set eyes upon him before. She did so involuntarily, and without again raising her eyes; a weight like destiny seemed to weigh down the eyelids. Captain Wilde looked right and left in search of a seat, but found none, until a youth, one of Raymond's groomsmen, who was sitting by Sophie, politely relinquished his seat, which was as politely accepted by Captain Wilde. Emily moved off, leaning on the arm of the boy. Captain Wilde glanced all around the room—no! no one was minding him—old men were talking politics and agriculture, and old women gossipping scandal and housewifery, and young men were courting seriously or flirting flippantly, and young women were being courted; no one was minding him—no one seemed at all interested in the sayings and doings of Captain Augustus Wilde, United States Navy, in full dress uniform though he was. He turned to look at Sophie; *she* was looking straight down at a ring upon the third finger of her left hand—*he* followed her eyes and looked at it, too; and now, losing her presence of mind, growing very much confused, and blushing deeply, she began unconsciously to twist it round and round—while he watched the operation. At last, while apparently in doubt how to address her, he made a remark, startling in its profundity—

"There is quite an assembly here this evening, madam."

Her reply, given in a very low tone, was equally original:

"Yes, sir, a large company for so sparse a neighborhood."

"Yes, the neighborhood *is* sparse and not increasing in population, I think; no new settlers coming in, while a considerable number of the old families are moving off. Is it not so?" said he, stooping forward, and looking intently upon Sophie's varying cheek, as though life and death were in the answer.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you suppose to be the reason?"

"I really do not know."

"One thing I know to be, the deterioration of land here, owing to their dreadfully destructive system of agriculture—the contrast between New England and the Southern States is so striking in this feature of agriculture; don't you think so?"

"Indeed, I never think about it."

"Oh, you are not at all a *fermière*. Yes, the contrast is very striking; the New Englanders have raised, by the labor of their own hands, a naturally ungenial soil to a high state of productiveness, while your Maryland planters have, even with the aid of their troops of negroes, exhausted the fertility of a soil naturally very productive. Why, Mrs. Withers, I am informed that your planters, instead of manuring their ground, plant one third of their land in rotation every year, leaving two thirds to recover itself. This must exhaust land very soon."

Sophie was silent.

"Warm climates and rich soils, where little labor is required to gain a subsistence, engender habits of indolence; now, though your climate is not very warm, yet I think that the original richness of your soil and the convenience of your gangs of negroes, first seduced your planters into their slovenly habits of cultivation—do you not think so?"

Sophie burst into tears. Her soft heart had been filling for the last half hour, and it ran over in tears! First a start of surprise, then a bright smile, then a quick glance around the room, and a bowed head and a low whisper in Sophie's ear.

"*Sophie!* the rooms are close and crowded, come, walk in the grapery with me!" and drawing her arm through his own, he led her forth into the yard, down that long shaded grape walk that led from the cottage porch through the yard to the cottage gate. They paused at the gate, separated, turned and looked at each other; the moon was shining full upon their faces, they could see each other serenely and distinctly. It was no longer Captain Augustus Wilde, bristling in his new uniform, and with a long string of U. S. N.'s at the end of his name, and it was no longer Mrs. Withers; but no—*she* had *never* changed, or even *seemed* to change. It was the Sophie and Gusty Wilde of eight years before! and as he gazed at her, the light kept leaping in his eyes, and,

"*Oh, Sophie! my Sophie!*" and opening his arms he caught her to his bosom and kissed! oh! he kissed her forehead, eyes, and lips, as though his lips would have grown there! and then holding her head a little off upon his arm, the better to gaze upon her, he looked down delightedly into her happy, smiling face, for it *was* a happy, smiling face now, and he said,

"Oh, my dear Sophie! this is *deep joy*, this is *charming comicality*, too! It *is*, you little brown-eyed witch! To think that scarcely five minutes ago, you and I were sitting in yonder crowded drawing-room, talking of *farming* and *agriculture*, and calling each other 'sir' and 'madam,' 'Mrs. Withers' and 'Captain Wilde,' with our bursting hearts covered over with conventional trivialities, as people might cover a mine with straw and stubble, with a paper wall between us, which your flood of tears washed down. God *bless* those tears! God *bless* those eyes that had no single glance—those lips that had no single tone for pride or deception, my own dear Sophie! You are more affectionate, more tender, more gentle, more natural than I am, my own sweet-lipped, gentle-eyed Sophie!"

Digitized by Google

and he drew her closely and kissed her again, but there was less ardor, more tenderness, and less passion and more affection in this caress.

"Oh, this is sweet, it is sweet, *Sophie! Sophie!* Why, her very name is something to breathe one's soul away upon; let us sit down, my Sophie—this meeting, this fast-flooding joy overpowers me!" and he sank down upon one of the long benches that ran on either side of the whole length of the walk, and he opened his arms again and said,

"Come, gentle Sophie, come sit beside me; lay your dear head under my arm, against my bosom, and let me talk to you. I am growing dizzier every moment; I thought I was prepared for this meeting, but, oh! my Sophie, I am as much stunned as though the thunder cloud of joy had but just broken over me! Say something rational to me, Sophie—*do*, dear child! You cannot? No, you cannot; you are as silly this moment, my gentle dove, as I am myself. But why do not you talk to me, darling? Your soft eyes are shining with love and joy, but you have not a word for me—why?"

"I am thinking of you so much," said Sophie, softly; "I am thinking, dearest friend, of the long, long years you have passed in desolation of heart, without a home, except your ship and quarters, without a fireside of your own, without a family circle, without affection; coming in and going out of port, alike unblessed, unwelcomed, and unwept, and all for me! for me! I am thinking of that, and wondering if life and soul could repay such love!"

"Understand me, dearest; it was *not* all for you—it was not, God knows, in the hope of ever possessing you! that would have been criminal, Sophie. No, dearest, when I parted with you at the carriage door upon that memorable evening, I carried with me, it is true, a desperate hope! but what am I talking of? I beg your pardon, Sophie; I said I was dizzy! yet this one thing permit me to say, dear Sophie; when I received a letter from my somewhat cool-headed sister, telling me that your marriage was over, and all about it, I as completely, as unreservedly, resigned you, as ever martyr at the stake resigned the life that was forced from him, without the least expectation of ever seeing you again, far less of this, of this!" and Captain Wilde went off into raptures again, kissing her again at "this" and "this."—"No, Sophie, I made up my mind to turn you out of my heart. I found it hard work; though I resolved to banish the thought of you, I struggled with it in vain! Struggling with a subject of thought—banishing a subject of thought, is a contradiction in terms; for while you have it by the head and shoulders, trying to put it out, you are more intertwined with it than ever, and it holds you fast. And I found, Sophie, that the only way to be rid of an inconvenient and intrusive image, was to fly from it, and I wrenched my attention off and riveted it upon another subject. It is a great thing, this free will of ours; I just had resolved to consider you as dead. I never inquired after you; and Emily, soon guessing my wish, never mentioned you in one of her letters. I studied the ancient languages, and soon, in the intervals of professional duty, I became quite absorbed in digging out Greek roots. It is an important duty, this government of the thoughts; they are the avenues by which good or evil approaches the soul. Only three weeks since, Sophie, it was that I learned that you had been free for nearly eighteen months. Only three weeks since, when coming into Boston harbor, I found a letter in the Post Office, long waiting from Emily." He fell into a reverie for a few minutes, from which he started, exclaiming:—

"Eight years! just think of it, Sophie! Eight years! and you are so much more beautiful and lovable—though once I did not think that could possibly be—but you are *so* beautiful, Sophie! Ah! indeed, I think that sorrow and thought and time are sometimes great beautifiers. You are *so* lovely—and I, Sophie! Sophie, I am thirty years old, how do you find me?"

She replied with her eyes! Her head was on his bosom, and her face upturned to his. His arm was around her waist, and his hand fondly nestling over both of hers. How long they sat thus, and into what deep silence they would fall while their spirits mingled! At last he said slowly, gently breaking the holy silence, reverentially:—

"My Sophie, I have but two or three days to remain in this neighborhood. My leave of absence was for three weeks. I was nine days in coming from Boston. I have twelve days left for my visit and voyage back. I must allow myself ten days for my return to insure punctuality. Now, it is demonstrated that I have but two days, to-morrow and the next day, to remain here."

"But why?" inquired Sophie, tearfully, "why? I always thought officers in returning from a voyage had a long leisure before them?"

"Yes, but, my dear, I have just been appointed to take command of a store-ship lying in Boston Harbor."

"Oh!"

"Yes. So that I must leave. Let us see—this is Tuesday—I must leave Friday morning. You are not attending to me, Sophie?"

"Oh, yes, I am indeed."

She had fallen into deep thought.

"It may be six months before I can come again."

"Oh no, not so long as that!"

"Most probably *longer*, Sophie!"

She turned her face down upon his bosom, quietly weeping.

"*Will you leave here with me Friday morning, Sophie?*"

She did not answer.

"Perhaps you think it an unlucky day. Will you go with me *Thursday* morning?"

She raised her head, but did not reply. He drew it back upon his bosom, and looking down upon her blushing face, where the tear-drops lay like dew on the red rose, he said gently:—

"I know where the trouble is, my Sophie; you are thinking what your neighbors will be likely to say if you marry so suddenly, to them so strangely—is not that it? But, Sophie, you will surely never weigh my affection and comfort against the gossip of a set of thoughtless neighbors? you will never do so," said he earnestly, alarmed at her continued silence, and pressing her closely to his bosom,—"You will not weigh our happiness with etiquette!"

Digitized by Google

"No," she said, quietly, "not with etiquette will I weigh it, for I wish to go with you, Augustus; nor with duty *must* I weigh it."

"What do you mean, dearest Sophie?" exclaimed he, anxiously.

"Only this—there are some preliminaries to be arranged, that cannot be settled without you."

"Then, whatever they may be, they *are* settled—just consider them settled, Sophie," said he, earnestly.

"But hear them; these are not things that can be despatched and forgotten; they may attend us some time. I would have you make no rash vows about them, Augustus."

"They are *settled*, I tell you, Sophie! *settled!* Your will, your wishes, are enough—are paramount! Have I not confidence in you, dearest Sophie? More, far more, than I have in myself; they are *settled!*" exclaimed he, impetuously.

"But you must know them to assist me."

"Very well; upon *that* account, I will listen, darling; but first, mind you, Sophie, I am to understand, am I not, that when I have settled all these preliminaries, we are to be united, and leave *together* on Thursday morning—ha! say, Sophie?"

"Yes," whispered Sophie, with a dying cadence.

"Say! speak louder, Sophie. I mistrust my ears—did you say 'yes?'"

"Yes, yes!" said Sophie, blushing scarlet, with the tears in her eyes, "I said 'yes.'"

"Yes! Ah! stop, let me take time to take in all this idea of 'yes.' Thursday morning, Sophie my wife! There is a point at which joy stuns one! Speak to me, Sophie!"

"I think that you forget I have not told you my preliminaries."

"Oh, the preliminaries! any that *I* have anything to do with? Never mind them, Sophie; but you are sure that you will not disappoint me Thursday morning? are you sure you will not put me off—tell me about dresses to be made, or a wedding-party to be got up, or at least make a delay about breaking up housekeeping at Heath Hall? Ah, yes! certainly, I see now; these are the very preliminaries of which you speak; and how, alas! can we settle them in two days!"

"Dear Augustus!" said Sophie, "do you think me so unconscious of the worth of your regard, and so ungrateful for it, as to think of trifling with it, or deferring our"—

"Marriage?"

"Yes; upon any but grounds of *duty*"—

"Oh, dear, dear, dear! *what* is it, then, Sophie; let us hear it quick! I listen, darling, punctilious little brown-eyed darling!"

"Well, then, our Rosalia"—

"Rosalia!"

"Yes, Rosalia Aguilar—*our* Rose, our beauty, our moonbeam, our love!"

"You are enthusiastic, my Sophie!"

"I am when I think of *her!* Oh, she is the very soul of love! My life became brighter, warmer, richer, when she came to me. That beautiful and loving child! her love bathes everything she looks upon in light and heat, as the sunbeams flood the landscapes! You will love her so much! She, the sweet child, loves all things—pities spares, or ministers to all things, from the broken rose-tree that wants binding up, to the old negro toiling home at noon from his hard day's work. I have seen the sweet child run and dip up a gourd of water from the bucket at the well, and carry to such a one, looking up so reverentially in his face, as though old age, toil, and suffering in any form, awoke her veneration. She is delicate and sensitive, too; she cannot bear the least unkind word or look; nor the least excess of cold or heat. This susceptible temperament, I think it is, that gives her such warm sympathies."

Captain Wilde was looking up with ardent admiration into the eloquent face of Sophie.

"Ah, I see," she continued, "that you admire her; and you will love her, oh! so much; your soul will go forth and bathe her with love as mine does. Oh, your soul will warm over her, glow over her, live around her. Your life will brighten into refulgence for loving Rosalia. Ah, yes! I see you will love her—you do love her. I see it in your speaking face."

"My own dear Sophie! I love you—*you*—my life brightens into refulgence in the light of *your* love—*yours*, my Sophie, of the loving heart and eloquent lip."

"People have blamed me for loving Rosalia, but how can I help it? You will see how impossible it will be."

"Well, my beautiful Sophie (how radiant your face becomes in the praise of one you love), my beautiful Sophie! what has this little Rosalia to do with the postponement of our union?"

"Merely this—Rosalia is my ward. She is now daily expected. If she should not arrive to-day, or to-morrow, I could not leave the neighborhood finally, of course, without seeing her—being assured of her safety—indeed, I should not like to leave her with Hagar?"

"Why?"

"Hagar is dangerous to one so tender as Rosalia. Would you put a dove in the guardianship of a young eagle? Hagar has a fine, high spirit—she would go through fire or flood to serve one she loved—but, mark you! she would cast that one she loved back into fire or flood if they should offend her. Therefore, with your consent, dear Augustus, I should wish to await Rosalia here, and take her with us to Boston."

Captain Wilde left her side and walked up and down the grapery for awhile. Then coming to her, he said,

"I will write to the Department to-night for an extension of my leave of absence, Sophie."

"Will you? Oh! will you? I shall be so glad! Of course you will get it?"

"Probably—yes; still these favors should be charily solicited, Sophie."

"I suppose so—well, if you do—I was about to say that we shall have the company of Hagar and Raymond, as well as that of Rosalia, on our journey. Raymond is appointed assistant professor at —— College, and they leave here in ten days."

"Oh!"

"Will not that be very agreeable?"

"I do not know, my dearest; I think I prefer your undivided company. So, Hagar and Raymond are going North?"

"Yes."

"And what is to be done with Heath Hall?"

"It *was* to have been the residence of Rosalia

Digitized by Google

and myself; now, I suppose, it is to be shut up and left so. We do not like to sell it. Indeed, it would bring but little; and some of us may like to come back some time to live in it. However! you know it will depend entirely upon the will of Raymond, for the property is now his, in right of his wife."

They had arisen now from their seats, and were sauntering slowly towards the house. The evening was beautiful, and the house was crowded, and spilling its company all over the piazza and yards. They separated and mingled with the guests. Once in her meandering about, Sophie felt herself enfolded by a pair of gentle arms and pressed to a soft, warm bosom. She was in Emily's embrace—who stooped and murmured in her ear, "My sister! my sweet sister at last!" and let her go. Next she met Hagar's wildly glancing eyes with a "Who'd have thought it?" sort of smile on her crimson lip, and then her hand was raised by Raymond and softly pressed to his lips, while his gentle eyes revealed the heartfelt congratulations it was yet premature to speak. And at last she rejoined Captain Wilde just as Hagar was giving him a pressing invitation to breakfast and dine at Heath Hall the next day, and just as he smiled and bowed acceptance.

CHAPTER XXII.

"She is all simplicity,
A creature meek and mild,
Though on the eve of womanhood
In heart a very child.
She dwells among us like a star,
That from its bower of bliss,
Looks down, yet gathers not a stain
From aught it sees in this."

MRS. WELBY.

THERE was going to be another great day at Heath Hall; a breakfast, dinner, and ball. Such was Hagar's will, and of course no one thought of opposing a bride in her honey-moon. Only old Cumbo swore in her wrath that before she would stay and cook for another such a "weddin'," she would be "sold to Georgy;" which, in negro thought and dialect, expresses the very extremity of perdition. It was a great day at Heath Hall; the breakfast table was set out under the shade between the rows of poplar trees, and it was loaded with the delicacies of the season, the peculiar delicacies of that favored neighborhood, game killed the day before, fresh fish, oysters, and soft crabs, caught that morning, &c., &c., &c. All the county, and—Captain Wilde were there, and after breakfast the company dispersed, and wandered over the house or grounds, or rowed out upon the bay at will.

Hagar, Raymond, Sophie, and Captain Wilde were grouped upon the point of the promontory. The captain occasionally swept the whole expanse of the bay within range of the telescope he held to his eye, and dropped it with a sigh and a shake of the head. There was no sail in sight.

"Have they not written to you, Mrs. Withers?"

"No," said Sophie, "not since Gusty left—we did not expect *that;* we expected them to hurry home with all possible expedition; oh, I grow so uneasy."

"Nay, do not be anxious, Sophie," exclaimed Hagar, "if anything had happened you know that Gusty would have written."

"But I have been so fearful ever since that wreck," sighed Sophie, paling.

"That is one reason why *I* am *not* anxious," said Hagar. "We have just had a wreck—such things do not occur frequently; that wreck will do for the next three or four years."

While she spoke, Tarquinius Superbus was seen strutting up the promontory from the hall; he came up to Sophie, and ducking his head by way of a salutation, said—

"Mrs. Widders, madam, dere is an 'rival at de Hall, and Mrs. Buncombe, she 'quests you to come down."

"An arrival—have they breakfasted—who is it? Mrs. Green!"

"It is Miss Aguilar and Mr. May, madam!"

"Rosalia and Gusty! why did you not say so before, you stupid fellow!" exclaimed Hagar, "how could they have come, Sophie? They must have dropped from the sky. How did they come, Tarquin?"

"In de poshay, Miss Rose, she 'fraid o' water."

"Ah, that was it," said Hagar, "I knew it was some of Rosalia's cowardice and selfishness that has given you all this uneasiness, Sophie!"

But Sophie was hurrying on, too happy to speak, far too happy.

They reached the Hall.

"Where is Rosalia? Where is she?" inquired Sophie, anxiously hurrying along in front of her party.

"In her chamber, changing her travelling dress—go to her—I will attend her," said Emily, as, at the same moment starting from her side, Gusty May sprang forward with strange gaiety in his manner, considering what we know of his then recent love-crosses, and grasped Sophie's hand, and then Hagar's, and then Raymond's, and then Captain Wilde's, shaking them all emphatically, joyously, as asking after everybody's health, and explaining that he and Miss Aguilar had had a delightful overland journey in a post-chaise, because Rosalia was afraid of the water, &c., &c.

Sophie passed on up stairs, and Hagar was about to follow her, when Emily laid her hand on her shoulder, and murmured close to her ear—

"Do not both of you leave your guests at the same time again, Hagar; you should remember the punctilious etiquette exacted by Mrs. Gardiner Green, and others present."

The spring of Hagar's upper lip started as the spring of her foot was arrested; and with a "Mrs. Gardiner Green," repeated in no very reverential tone, she stood still, especially as Raymond's hand very softly fell upon her own just then.

Sophie passed up stairs, and opened the door of Rosalia's chamber, catching for a single instant a glimpse of this beautiful picture. The lovely girl reposed in a large, easy chair; her pale gold wavy hair, parted above her fair brow floated down her blue-veined temples, down her

Digitized by Google

faint rose-tinted cheeks, down the tender undulations of her dove-like throat and bosom, and flowed upon the soft, white muslin that covered her form. As the door opened and Sophie flew towards her, she arose and dropped in her embrace; the gentle arms were around Sophie's neck, the golden hair overflowing her, her soft form folded to her bosom, the warm heart throbbing against her heart, the warm lips pressed to her lips, and tears of joy slowly falling.

"My love, my baby, my dove-eyed darling, welcome! welcome!" sobbed Sophie, pressing her again and again to her bosom. "Oh! is it possible that now I shall have you always with me, to see you as much as I please, to love you as much as I please, to kiss you! oh! my dove! my beauty! as often as I *must*. How have you been, Rose? how do you feel, Rose? are you well? are you much tired? what will you have, Rose? Come to the window and let me take a good look at you;" and Sophie drew her to the window, held her off and gazed upon her beauty as though she could have quaffed it up, and opening her arms, folded her again in an embrace, murmuring "oh! my child, my nursling, you are *so* fair. Look at me, Rose; look at me, my darling! bless those dove-eyes, with their brooding tenderness!" Then she sat down on the lounge, and drawing Rose to her side, passed her arms around her waist and said, looking down in her face lovingly, "I am going to be married soon, Rosalia; to be married to one whom I love, and who loves me above all things."

Rosalia's eyes started, dilated, and then softened as she murmured, "And he loves you?"

"Yes."

"And you love him?"

"Yes, darling."

Rose stole her hands up around Sophie's, and kissed her, exclaiming softly,

"Oh! I am so glad, so glad, Sophie, dear Sophie!"

They were both silent, because Rose was bending forward before her, holding both her hands and gazing lovingly up into her face. At last she inquired,

"And is he gentle and kind—in a word, is he *good!*"

"Very good, my little love."

"And handsome?"

Sophie smilingly replied, "I think so, darling."

"Is he young?"

"Well, *yes!*"

"How young?"

"Thirty!"

"Oh, that is *old.*"

"Why, no it is not, darling—except in the estimation of 'sweet sixteen.'"

"And Hagar is married—how funny!—and—how *serious*. What makes me feel so differently about your marriage and about Hagar's, Sophie? Your marriage—the idea of it fills me with still religious joy, like *church* music swelling from the deep-toned organ, echoing through the lofty arches and filling one's soul full of love and awe, tempered by faith. But Hagar's marriage affects me like martial music that attends the troops in their embarkation—inspiring, animating, but sad, but painful. Now, why is this, why does my heart fill and overflow my eyes, when I think of Hagar's being a wife; surely it is a happy destiny; and why, tell me why, when I kneel down night and morning to say my prayers, it comes into my head to pray *so earnestly* for Hagar's happiness—why do I weep now that Hagar is a happy bride? she *is* a *happy* bride, is she not?"

"Just as happy as *Hagar* is capable of being, my love."

"As happy as you are?"

"She should be."

"Then why do I feel so?"

"I do not know, my love; possibly you feel that Hagar is too wild to make a quiet wife, too fierce to make a loving one, and too self-willed to become a complying one; while on the other hand you rest in the assurance that I am sober and common-place enough to make a quiet fireside comfortable."

"No, that is not it, I never studied that much in my whole life. But how do you feel about it, Sophie?"

"My love, I had some of your forebodings, but I had a better reason than instinct for them, and now they are about dissipated. Hagar is naturally wild, fierce, self-willed, and scornful—but she has the very companion I should have selected for her happiness. Raymond is wise, gentle, and firm, or he impresses me in that way. You have never seen Raymond?"

"Oh, no! you know, never. Is he like uncle?"

"The very opposite in many things."

"There! dear Sophie, now please send Hagar to me. I want to see Hagar so much—but stay! perhaps Hagar might think I ought to go to *her;* she is so proud. But tell her, Sophie, that I am not dressed yet, and that I want so much for her to hug and kiss me here, before I go down to all those strangers."

And Sophie pressed her hands and withdrew from the room.

Soon after the door was thrown quickly open, and Hagar sprang upon her cousin's neck, half cutting her soft shoulders in the wire-like embrace of her slender arms, while the dark brow bent over the fair one, the blue-black ringlets glittered over the pale golden hair, and the deep carnation cheek met the pale, rose-tinted face an instant, and then she was released.

"So, Hagar, you are married! dear me, how queer! is it not? Why, Hagar, you don't look at all different, not a bit like a married woman." And Rose got up and stood by her, and took her hand affectionately and looked up merrily in her face, "dear me, no! not at all like a married woman; Mrs. Withers! goodness! do they call you 'Mrs. Withers,' Hagar? and do you always remember to answer to that name—and how do you like being married, sure enough, Hagar—Mrs. Withers, I mean? Don't turn your head away and crimson and darken so, while scorn and mirth gleam and flash from under your eye-lashes and upper lip; and don't laugh—don't *you* laugh if I do; it is no laughing matter; I feel it so most of the time when I think of it. Oh, Hagar, my only sister that I ever knew, I do pray for your happiness morning and evening!"

"Thank you."

"Now tell me about Raymond, he is young, handsome, graceful, accomplished, and all that; but tell me, is he *gentle?*"

"*Gentle!* why do you ask, Rosalia? *Gentle!*

Digitized by Google

I gave him my hand—that is your fit answer, dear."

"Yes, I know—I asked because—I may say it to you without blame now, Hagar—because his *father* was not gentle, you know—and—and we sometimes love those who are not gentle with us, Hagar," and her soft eyes were suffused.

"Yes," exclaimed Hagar, "and then there is even in seeming gentleness, sometimes gentle strength, gentle force, gentle firmness, more irresistible, more inevitably enslaving, than rudeness, roughness, violence could be," and the dark girl's soul half gleamed from her countenance like a dagger half-drawn from its sheath.

"What do you mean, Hagar—dear Hagar, what do you mean?"

"Nothing! I mean that it is time for you to dress and come down—and I mean that you must not ask me any more questions. Come, let me be your dressing-maid for once, and—but no matter, I fear I should make a failure in the essay," and taking up a hand-bell, she rang it at the door. A negro girl came in, and with her assistance the toilet of Rosalia was soon made. Her golden hair was arranged in ringlets; her dress was a light blue silk; her fair neck and arms were bare, and adorned with a pearl necklace and bracelets. Hagar wore a black lace dress. Now, as Hagar clasped the last bracelet on her arm (she did that for her), standing with her before the mirror, nothing could have been more unlike in feminine beauty than these two girls. Hagar, so small, straight, dark, and sparkling—Rosalia so fair, soft, and gentle.

"Come, now, let us go down into the drawing-room, Rose."

"But see here, dear Hagar, I must go in the kitchen, and see Aunt* Cumbo first; I know she wants to see me so much, so do I her."

"But, my dear—"

"Oh, but *please* let me, dear Hagar; for poor old Cumbo, you know, we must not slight her, because she is old and—no, we must not slight her;" and looking pleadingly at Hagar she passed out slowly before her, and stole down the back stairs. Hagar followed her. They went through an end door, and making a circuit to avoid meeting any one, reached the kitchen. The old woman was busy, and grumbling over her culinary operations before the fire, as Rose stood in her blooming loveliness in the door.

"Aunt Cumbo, how do you do?" said she, approaching. At the sound of her voice the old woman dropped ladle and pan, and turning around, gazed at her through bleared eyes.

"Oh, Aunt Cumbo, don't you know me? It's me—Rose," said she, going and taking the black old withered hand in her own.

"Oh, it's my baby! it's my baby! it's my sweet, lovely baby come back to its old mammy again!" and the old creature fell weeping over her shoulders.

"Oh, Rose, shake her off—don't you see she is ruining your dress."

"Oh, no! would you hurt her poor old feelings about a dress? her poor old feelings!" said Rose, raising her hands and stroking her withered cheeks, and looking kindly into the dim face.

"My baby! Oh, de little soft cotton wool hands!—bress Gor A'mighty for lettin' old nigger lib to see her baby once more 'fore she go—see if old mammy ain't got anoder biscuit in her bosom for it—no, dey ain't bake yet; nebber min' she'll save one, and you set down dere, on dat 'tool, while mammy roas' a sweet tatoe for you;" and the old creature put her gently down on a stool, and went to rummaging under an old locker. Again Rose's eyes were full of tears, and she said in a low tone to Hagar—

"She is in her second childhood, Hagar; you did not prepare her for this; poor old human being; nothing at all left of her but the loving heart. They tell me that it is the first thing that lives, and the last that dies."

"You had better look at your dress."

"How can she do her work?"

"Mechanically—we do not wish her to work; but I believe she would die if she had not the privilege of cooking and grumbling; and Rose, don't be a fool—she is well enough; you know it is so with all these Guinea negroes; they have such tenacity of vitality, that their strength of body outlives for years the decay of their mental faculties; besides, she is seldom so confused as this. Your sudden arrival has startled her, and jostled past and present together in her apprehension; but come now, Rosalia, you must come into the house;" and Rosalia went up to the fire and said—

"Aunty!—mammy!—you will let me go into the parlor with the other ladies; you know—"

"But, honey, de tatoe ain't roas' yet!" replied the old woman, as she raked the ashes over the sweet root.

"Well, aunty, when the potatoe is done you send Tarquinius for me, and I'll come out here and eat it."

"Yes, honey! yes, my baby! and when you go in house you jes speak to Miss Sophie 'bout 'Quinius 'Perbus; he too much mun—don't min' nuffin 'tall I say, till I have to switch him some ob dese days; you min' now." And they left the kitchen.

Rosalia Aguilar had come home to no very near relations, to no mother, father, sister, or brother; yet never did only child returning to idolizing parents meet with a more tender and enthusiastic reception, from Sophie down to old Cumbo, and thence down to the cat that ran between her feet, crossing before them, rubbing her sides against them, and impeding her steps as she walked into the drawing-room. A low murmur of irrepressible admiration saluted her as she entered—old friends then crowded around, and new acquaintances were introduced to her, and it was half an hour before the beauty and the pet was left in quiet possession of her sofa. Sophie sat on one side of her, Captain Wilde on the other. At this moment Raymond Withers entered the room bowing and smiling, and passing up to Hagar, who stood by one of the open windows, he said—

"Which is your cousin?—I have not been introduced to her yet."

"Have you not?—I will present you, then,—but first," said Hagar, covertly watching his countenance, "look at her and tell me what you think of her. There, now you have a good opportunity of observing her without attracting her notice; there she is, seated between

* In the country parts of Maryland and Virginia, the children and young people usually call the old negroes "Aunt" or "Uncle." Further south, "Mammy," or "Daddy" so-and so

Digitized by Google

Sophie and Captain Wilde, talking with the latter."

Raymond's eyes followed the indication of her glance. Rosalia's form was slightly bent towards Captain Wilde, and her face was softening and glowing under the inspiration of their conversation. Raymond slightly started—his gaze became fixed—absorbed—Hagar's eyes burned into his countenance, but he did not feel it.

"Well," at last she said, "what do you think of her?"

He did not reply—his eyes were riveted upon the group on the sofa. Hagar's eyes were fixed on his face—her lips compressed until the blood left them pale.

"Well," she said, again, speaking very slowly and distinctly, "what do you think of Rosalia?"

He did not seem to hear her; his soul was absorbed. Now all the fire seemed to have left Hagar's lips and cheeks, and to be concentrated in the intensely glowing eyes that burned into the face of her husband, and he did not feel it!

At last a motion, a change of attitude, a raising of Rosalia's eyes, dissolved the spell, and he turned to Hagar.

"Well," said she, with pale lips, "how do you like her?"

"She is beautiful! beautiful! the most perfectly beautiful living thing I ever saw. In all my dreams of beauty, I never saw a vision of loveliness like that! Do but see, Hagar!—the heavenly love and tenderness in her air and manner; one looking at her, fears that she may fade into air like a vision of poetry."

"Shall I take you up and present you?" she asked, in a low voice.

He might have observed—*must* have observed, the painful constraint of her manner, but that his attention was so concentrated.

"Shall I take you up and present you?"

"No, no, love! not yet—I wish to observe her from this point a little longer."

She bit her lips until the blood started—her eyes seemed drawn inwards in their intense burning.

"Well, then, will you excuse me, Raymond? I wish to leave the room."

"No, love! no! I cannot spare you—you have been away from me too long this morning already," and he closed his hand firmly upon hers, while he still poured his gaze upon the sofa group.

At last she spoke again—"Raymond," and pressed his hand to call his attention,—"*Raymond!*"

"Well, love!"

She spoke so low that he had to stoop to catch her words.

"Do you not think that if before our union you had seen Ro—"

"Well?"

"Nothing—nothing—I had better not—see! they are looking over here—come! now let me introduce you."

He now first observed her pallor.

"It seems to me you do not look well to-day, Hagar."

She smiled bitterly.

"Perhaps not—*to you!*" she added, mentally.

"Are you not well?"

"Yes."

"Why do you look so haggard, then?"

"*To you?* The force of contrast!—and your eyes are dazzled."

"I must know what you mean; Hagar, but here we are," he whispered, as they paused before the sofa.

Hagar presented him, and Rosalia arose, in her simple, affectionate way, and offered her rosy cheek to the kiss of Raymond, as her relative. Captain Wilde, starting from his seat, exclaimed,

"Come, Withers, I will do the magnanimous, although it costs some self-denial, I assure you, yet you shall have my place—come, Mrs. Withers, senior!"

And going round to Sophie he drew her arm through his own, and walked her away to the piazza, leaving her place to Hagar, who immediately assumed it.

"Now!" said Sophie, her brown eyes dilated, blazing with light and joy, "what do you think of my Rose—is she not beautiful?—is she not sweet, blooming, fragrant?"

"Beautiful!—stop, Sophie! don't set me off!—you know I am 'gusty' (*stormy*), when I get an imposing subject! Beautiful!—why she *radiates* beauty—no one can sit by her or talk with her without catching beauty! growing beautiful! Did you observe that poor old Gardiner Green, how, as he talked with her, all the latent goodness and gladness that were smouldering in the bottom of his heart, was kindled up and broke through his face, lighting up his winter-apple cheeks and black eyebrows until they glowed with beauty, as an autumn landscape glows in the sunbeams!"

"Oh, you admire her; you love her; you are a poet!"

"She has made me one!"

"I *knew* you would love her—still I am so glad to *feel* it."

"Love her! dearest Sophie! I was prepared to love her for your sake; now I love her for her own!"

"And I *knew* you would, as I said, and now I rejoice to feel it; now, then, you feel the same pleasure that I do in the thought of having the sweet girl with us?"

"Have her with us! Yes, that is the best of it—we shall have her with us—by our fire-side in winter, and about our piazza in summer, and all around us—so we can see her always, and caress her as much as we please, and love her as dearly, and make her beautiful being as happy as possible—have her with us—see here, Sophie, I am afraid I should be tempted to kick any fellow who should come courting her—yet of course it must come to that, and it will come very soon to that. Beauty and sensibility and susceptibility like hers will not long remain unwooed, unwed, in a naval station full of gay and romantic young officers; and even now I am afraid Hagar will be wanting her, and that Rosalia will prefer to go with the companion of her childhood—and that chap, Raymond, will take sides with them, and we shall lose the dear girl after all."

"You need not be afraid of that. Hagar does not want her. Hagar loves no human being, neither man, woman, nor child, no one except Raymond. Hagar's affections are very concentrative. She has never loved any creature but Raymond, and she has loved him intensely from childhood, and indeed I fear

Digitized by Google

there is as much tyranny as tenderness in her affection for her husband."

"Oh! well! never mind them, Sophie; let them torture and transport each other in turn, as young lovers of their temperament must for a while; only let them leave this charming Rosalia to light our sober, quiet home. What are you laughing at, you partridge?"

"Thinking how very sober any home is going to be that calls such a boisterous fellow as you are, master."

"Humph! but, Sophie, but it will be *you* that will make it quiet, my love! my dove! *you*, Sophie—come! does not my boisterousness subside into gentle joy by your side? Say, am I not quiet enough?—I can get quieter!"

"No, don't—I—I think—perhaps I like you all the more for being just what you are."

"Are you really contented with me, Sophie?—I have been so much afraid, sometimes, that my 'boisterousness' should shock and alarm you—now does it, ever?"

"Never—never—it is never rude or violent, you know, Gusty, and it only lifts my own sober cheerfulness into agreeable gaiety."

You do not care to hear all that was said by the partners in this "mutual admiration" firm—they walked and talked, as long as *you* walked and talked, with you remember whom—or as long as you *expect* to walk and talk with, perhaps you *do not* know whom. They did not return to the house until summoned to dinner. A large company sat down at table. A dancing party in the evening closed the day, and the guests dispersed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BRIDE'S PARTING.

"From the home of childhood's glee,
From the days of laughter free,
From the love of many years,
Thou art gone to cares and fears;
To another path and guide,
To a bosom yet untried!
Bright one, oh! there well may be
Trembling 'midst our joy for thee."

MRS. HEMANS.

"MOTHER! is not Rosalia to stay with you?" asked Gusty May, as he lingered over a late breakfast with his mother.

"Why, *no*, Gusty, certainly not! what put such a thing in your head?"

"Why, mother, it came there naturally enough, as Rose lived with us many years before she went to school, and as you always seemed so fond of her, and she also seemed so necessary to you, I thought, of course, you would like to have her again."

"But you know, my dear, *why* Rose lived with us; that reason no longer exists, and Rose goes with her natural guardians."

"And, mother, who *are* her natural guardians? Two new brides, quite lost in the glory of their bridehood; have *they* thought or care for Rosalia?"

"Sophie has."

"Yes, but Sophie! Sophie is so innocent. Sophie is going to live—didn't you know it? on board the store-ship."

"Ship!"

"Lord bless you, *yes*, mother! aboard the store-ship uncle commands. There is an elegant cabin, furnished luxuriously as any city drawing-room, and far beyond anything you see down in this neighborhood. Well, as I was saying, Sophie will live there—now is that a desirable home for a young girl like Rosalia, among all those gay, young officers, with a chaperone no wider awake than Sophie is, with a guardian merry and wild as Uncle Gusty?—and I tell you, mother, those young officers are devils of fellows—you know I know them."

Emily fell into thought a moment, and then she said,

"Sophie is indeed very abstracted, and my brother, as you say, is wild; but then there is Hagar; I think that it were better she resided with Hagar."

"What, mother, with Hagar! don't you know that Raymond proposes to board the first year? and with the narrow salary of an under professor, will Raymond be able to take her? Besides, a girl dependent, as she is, should be made to feel that she has quite a choice of homes, that many hearts and doors are ready to fly open to her."

"You know that I should love to have her with me, Gusty. I will invite her, press her to come. I do not think, however, that either Sophie or my brother will be willing to resign her."

"Thank you, dear mother! thank you!" exclaimed Gusty, jumping up and kissing her, "oh! thank you—'willing!' no, I don't indeed suppose they will be willing to resign her—who *could*, in fact? nevertheless, we must try to overrule them."

"You run quite enthusiastic upon the subject, Master Gusty!" exclaimed Emily, looking at him attentively.

"Enthusiastic, mother! Gracious Heavens, mother! one must be cold, dead, yes, a *corpse*—a corpse! I mean a *statue*—one must never have *had* life—a statue! I should rather have said a *block of marble*—one must never have had *form* not to be inspired with enthusiasm by that girl—that seraph!"

"Hey! Master Gusty! have you fallen in love with Rosalia?"

"Speak low, mother! Oh! breathe her name in flute-like tones—for, mother! when I speak of enthusiasm, I mean the rapt enthusiasm of the adoring saint for his guardian angel! the silent enthusiasm with bended knees, clasped hands, and upraised eyes, mother!"

"Humph! not the enthusiasm for instance that Hagar inspired some weeks ago—a passion that was going to compel you to send the planets whirling against each other!" archly smiled Emily.

"Mother, no more of that 'an you love me.'"

"So you have got over your phrensy for Hagar?"

"Why, mother,—*of course*," said Gusty, assuming a look of shocked propriety, "*of course*—you did not suppose I was going to keep on loving her *now*, did you?"

"I should hope not, certainly; and I am glad your lips confirm my hope."

Digitized by Google

"I am a man of honor, mother!" said Gusty, dilating.

"Certainly you are, my love! I am very sure of that—nevertheless, Master Gusty, I cannot really give you credit for the exertion of any great moral power in this affair. I think that your passion has been conquered as the Indians conquer danger when pursued by the flames of a burning prairie—fire by fire—love by love."

"Stop, mother! be just—despair and conscience did much for me even before I left her."

"And yet that was a great infatuation of yours, and now here is another quite as great—I am afraid you are fickle, Gusty! Have you really quite ceased to regret Hagar?"

"Quite, mother."

"And care nothing at all about her?"

"Oh! stop—*yes*, I care a great deal about her in—in a brotherly way, you understand! in fact, just as I always *did*, until I had to go mad about her, you know. Care about Hagar? yes! I guess I do! Let any fellow crook his finger at Hagar, and see if he don't get his neck twisted, that's all? It is singular that I should have got into such a delirium, is it not, though? and more singular that I should have got out of it—don't you think so, mother?"

"No, indeed—it is perfectly natural—the 'harder it storms the sooner it is over' is an acknowledged atmospherical fact, and by all that ever I have seen, it is as true of passionate as it is of atmospheric storms. I hope that you will never marry during the raging of any phrensy of passion—for, if you do, you will be very apt to make yourself and another miserable for the rest of your lives."

"You may well call it a phrensy—a storm, mother! Gracious Heavens! yes! That intoxicating Hagar! I used to reel away from her whirling, spinning, tipsy! That electric Hagar! she would flash into my soul blaze after blaze, like the lightning of a dark, tempestuous night, dazzling, blinding, stunning me!"

"And this other?"

"*And this other*—oh! stop, mother; put a long pause between *that* and—'this other,' and sink your voice low, like you were whispering in a church—this other dawns on my soul like a soft, rosy morn, faintly, gently, sweetly, and bright and brightening! Hagar broke the silence of my heart as with a laugh, a shout, a whoop, a halloa! 'This other' *steals* upon the ear like a soft note of music, rising and swelling into harmony and volume!"

"My poet!"

"No, mother, not your *poet;* I feel more like your *apostle*—I feel when I think of her more like saying my prayers—I feel while sitting by her as if I were doing a meritorious thing; my heart is hushed into a holy content and calm, such as one feels when taking a seat in the church while the organ is pealing 'gloria in excelsis,' or the preacher is reading 'The Lord is in His holy temple—let all the earth keep silence before Him.'"

"Do not be irreverent, Gusty."

"Oh, I am not, mother; indeed, so far from it, that I never thought of the Lord so much, worshipped the Lord so much, felt the Lord's presence in all the beautiful sights and sounds of nature so much, as during that heavenly journey with Rosalia. Let me tell you about it, mother—good, best mother, you know I tell you everything—always did ever since I was a boy."

"Everything, Gusty?"

"Well, yes—that is—*almost* everything. Well, you know after I set out from here, I tried not to think of Hagar, but the more I struggled with the image, the more intensely I thought of her."

"Of course; you should have *fled* from the subject, fixed your attention on something else—never let your thoughts struggle with a sinful subject—fly from it."

"Yes. Well, I was a little shy of meeting Rose—she always *was* delicate, sensitive, and refined—and I thought two years in a boarding-school had educated and refined her tastes and manners up to the highest fine lady standard. Well, when I got to Boston, and when I reached the outskirts of the town, and when I passed the gate in front of Mrs. Tresham's marble and stuccoed mansion, I felt embarrassed. I had to recollect that I was an officer in the United States Navy, mother! I had to turn all the way back to my hotel, wait half a day to get a card engraved, put on my best new uniform, get a pair of lavender-colored gloves, and a cambric handkerchief—throw myself into a carriage and ride there (I had walked before), and all for fear Miss Aguilar should think me rough, countryfied. Well, I made coachee get down and ring the bell, take in my card, 'Augustus W. May, U. S. N.' Come, I thought, that would do—that was going it *en grand seignior*. Presently I alighted, and was shown into the parlor. Magnificent, mother! precisely like a wealthy merchant's drawing-room; and while I was waiting there—sitting on a fine crimson velvet seat, lolling back with one arm grandly thrown over the back of the chair, throwing back my shoulders, expanding my chest; in fact, enlarging and dilating generally and sublimely! telling myself all the time that I was Aug. W. May, U. S. N.,—the door swung noiselessly open, and a tall lady, in stiff black satin and a turban, entered, followed by a lovely girl, with golden ringlets flashing down upon her light blue silk dress. While I arose and was flourishing my grandest bow, and the lady elaborating her profoundest curtsey, Rosalia, the dear girl! floated towards me, holding out her dear white arms, and warbling, "Gusty, Gusty!' just as when she was a baby, and I a lad. I forgot that I was Aug. W. May, U. S. N. I forgot Madam Tresham—and Gusty Wilde started—sprang—clasped Rosy in his arms, to his bosom, and kissed her eyes, and nose, and mouth, while the room spun round for joy! and he was just about to whirl Rosy all around the room in a reel, when he was arrested by the sight of her Royal Highness, Madam Tresham, sinking superbly into a chair, elevating her double chin with slow haughtiness; then he dropped Rose, and blushed, and bowed and sat down.

"'Your *brother*, of course, I presume, Miss Aguilar?' she said, elevating her chin sublimely.

"Now, she *knew* better, of course she did; she said that out of an air."

"In rebuke, Gusty, and she was right; you behaved indecorously."

"See here, mother, can I help it? When my

Digitized by Google

blood gives one jump from my heart to the top of my head and the tips of my fingers!"

"Well, what did Rosalia reply?"

"She said, 'Oh, no, dear madam, he is not my brother; but we were brought up together,' and the old lady said 'Ah!' and then I handed my credentials, Sophie's letter requesting the presence of Miss Aguilar. I swear madam did not seem inclined to comply! however, next day we set off by stage for New York, because Rose was afraid of water, and we travelled by coach as far as Baltimore, and then, as no stage runs this route, we were obliged to take a chaise, and oh! was not that a delightful journey,—a glimpse of Heaven, mother! a specimen of life in Paradise, those three days' journey in the chaise! I and Rose alone; the dear girl, how many times she would get out to rest the horse and walk by my side while I led him up the hill! Now, mother, don't forget; you'll invite Rose, won't you?"

"Of course."

"You love Rose, don't you?"

"Yes, as a daughter."

"And you would take her for a daughter, wouldn't you?"

"Most willingly."

"That's you, mother."

Rosalia was in demand. That same morning Raymond Withers stood by the mantel-piece, his elbow resting upon the top, his head leaned upon his hand, his eyes bent down upon the slight figure of Hagar, whom he held in a half embrace with the other arm.

"Hagar, love," he said, in his flute-like tones.

"Well, Raymond!"

"What disposition is to be made of your cousin?"

"Rosalia?"

"Of course, Rosalia."

"She is to reside with Captain Wilde and Sophie."

"I want you to invite her to accompany us—to live with us, in fact,—to make one of our family."

Hagar was silent.

"Well, Hagar?"

She did not reply.

"Will you invite her to-day, Hagar? we have but a few days left, and the child should know where she is going. Invite her to-day, Hagar—now!"

Hagar's eyes were rooted to the rug.

"You do not reply, Hagar: perhaps you would rather *I* should speak to her myself, and yet methinks it would beseem *you* more; shall I invite Rosalia, or you?"

"Just as you please."

"Then you speak to her, and let me know her decision, will you?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"At the first opportunity."

"You speak coldly, I had almost said sullenly, Hagar. Do you not like this plan?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Do not press me for a reason, Raymond; why should *you* be so anxious for Rosalia to become an inmate of our family?"

"First, because it is only common kindness to a young relative who is depending upon some of us to offer her a home; and secondly, because I am very much pleased with Rosalia, and think that she will be quite an acquisition to our fireside."

Her hand was in his as she stood by his side; but her forehead was bent forward against the lower part of the chimney-piece, so that her long, extremely long blue-black ringlets hung down below her stomacher, like a veil concealing her face, hiding the corrugating brow, gleaming eyes, flushed cheek, and quivering lips.

"Miss Aguilar is not dependent for a home—her father left her a small property."

"I do not say and did not mean that she was dependent for a roof to shelter her fair head, or a board to sit at, but if she has ever such a fortune she is a young, delicate, sensitive girl, and she *is* dependent on some of us for a *home*, for kindness, tenderness, affection."

"She has all that, or will have, all that with Sophie and Captain Wilde."

"Nevertheless let her feel that she is encompassed with affection—poor girl, she has no *parents*, let her feel that she has *friends*."

Hagar was again silent. Then he spoke.

"What is your objection to our plan?"

"We are going to board, as I understand, and so we have after all no home of our own to offer her,"

"But we are *not* going to board—I have changed my plan."

"Since when?" inquired Hagar, with a slightly sarcastic tone.

"Since my tenant moved out of my house on the Hudson!" replied Raymond, coldly.

"Oh! I did not know you owned a house anywhere."

"Probably *not!* you have no *means* of knowing—you have just learned *that* fact for the first time, as you will soon learn *others*, my love!"

"What others?" sneered Hagar.

"No matter now—invite Rosalia to come with us as I requested you, my dear, will you?"

"Yes, I will—Raymond."

"Well, love?"

"You seem very much charmed with Rosalia!"

"I am—I could not tell you *how* much charmed with her—she is a seraph!"

"Raymond!" she spoke huskily now, "suppose you had met Rosalia before our marriage, even before our engagement?"

"Well!"

"Do you not think that you would have rather loved and wooed *her* than *me*—that you, even now, were we free, would prefer her?"

"Prefer her!"

"Prefer her to *me*—could you not love Rosalia better than Hagar?" said she, speaking with great rapidity. "She is fair, full formed. I am small, thin, and dark. She is soft, gentle, sensitive. I am wild, fierce, and proud, proud to every one but *you*, Raymond. She is tender. I am hard. She is graceful. I am rude. She is all that is lovely, fascinating in form, features, temper, and manners. I am all that is repellent in person, character, and deportment—every one loves her—all dislike me."

"Hagar."

"Tell me, Raymond, have you not followed

Digitized by Google

the stream in this general, this inevitable admiration and love?"

"Hagar!"

"Have you not claimed my hand too hastily? Do you not now regret it, wishing that you had waited longer and looked further—lamenting that you had not seen Rosalia while you were yet disengaged?"

"*Hagar!*"

"You do not deny it! You only echo and re-echo, 'Hagar!' 'Hagar.' Yes, *Hagar!* that is my name, my fit name—what strange prophetic inspiration was it that made them drop my proper name of Agatha and call me 'Hagar?' Alas! I might have known it, Raymond! Oh! did I not *beg* you to defer our marriage? Alas! what forebodings were mine! Truly coming events cast their shadows before! Oh! Raymond, I might have known—Rosalia has won in succession every heart from me—first Sophie's, then Mr. Withers's, the servants', the neighbors', Mrs. May's, and lately, think of it! I *was* really glad of *that*, not knowing what an omen it was! lately, *Gusty's*. A month ago Gusty was perfectly infatuated with my poor face, raved, talked of blowing his brains out. Well! two weeks ago he set out for Rosalia, met her again, brought her home, and now he raves more about Rosalia's shoe or glove than he ever did about my whole being! And then! and then! oh! God, you, Raymond, *you!* If you could have seen yourself when I first pointed her out to you, as *I* saw you, drunk with her beauty!"

Her blood was kindling in her veins, while her bosom heaved and set with the motion of the hidden fire that blazed and died and blazed upon her cheeks, as you have seen a red flame in the night rise and fall waved by the wind—while her eyes scintillated sparks.

"I wish," she said, "that as I am so much smaller, I were soft and weak like other women! that I had more lymph, and so could easily melt! could weep! I can *not*—I am *hard*—my muscles are like tempered *steel*—they imprison a strong grief that rages, burns, and rends, finding no escape, no vent, no expression! I wish that I could weep! could die! like other women."

During all this rhapsody, Raymond had been looking down on her with the greatest calmness of attitude and expression—his head still supported by the arm that rested on the mantelpiece—his eyes quietly observing her. Now he took her hot and quivering hand and led her to the window—there were two chairs facing each other at this open window. He motioned her into one, dropping into the other himself—he took both of her hands into his own and gazed into her agonized countenance a minute, and then said:

"Hagar! look me in the face, look me straight in the eyes, come!" and as she raised her eyes piercing with anguish to *his* eyes, there was a sedative influence emanating from his manner that acted upon her nerves, reducing her to quiet, she knew not how or wherefore. He held her hands thus, looking straight into her fascinated eyes thus for a few moments, and then his flute-like tones gently stole on the silence as he said,

"Hagar! I love peace, quietude, repose, benign repose. I love low tones, soft footsteps, gentle manners, sweet smiles, and complying tempers around me, and I must have them—look straight in my eyes and see if you do not feel that I *will* have them? So, Hagar, no more of this tragic acting, if you please, my love."

Her eyes were fixed full on his, in a vague but painful surprise; she did not attempt yet to reply.

"It is this harmonious repose that charms me so in Rosalia."

"Then why," she murmured at last, "why were you ever attracted to one so every way opposite as myself?"

"Because you can be made every way better; one don't want a character *all* cotton wool; a good steel spring that rebounds from pressure is not unpleasant in your organization. I like to know that there is a strength, force, energy in you when required, but I like it—*latent*—under perfect *command*—do you mark! and you are not, because you happen to have a whole magazine of artillery and ammunition, to fire and flame and blaze away at such a rate! *or in the least degree;* you must grow tame, my wild love."

"My peculiarities, then, are not altogether repulsive to you; you love me, despite of them all!"

"I love you *because* of them all, my Hagar; and—but *mind!*" and here his voice sank to a lower key and deeper tone than she had ever heard, and his gaze was steadily fixed on hers, "*You must place confidence in me;* that I demand! without that your love is worthless to me; mine to you. I love Rosalia, but not in the way you imagine, foolish girl. I would not marry her if I could. You spoke of my admiration of her last evening. I was 'drunk' with gazing on her beauty—a delicate word for a lady, by the way—never let me hear it from your lips again, Hagar! I was 'entranced,' &c.—now observe, I will illustrate—last week you and I rode out together; it was a beautiful evening, and the sun was sinking like a world in flames, lighting up into flashing splendor half a hemisphere of crimson purple and gold sky, of blue water, and green hills and vales; and you, drawing rein upon the brink of a lofty cliff, gazed rapt upon the scene until your face was as a small mirror reflecting all the glow of the sunset—your soul seemed pouring from your eyes, until the sun sank behind a bank of clouds that lay like a low range of blue mountains immediately on the horizon, and then the spell that bound your revery was dissolved." Oh! how intensely her eyes burned into *his* eyes while he spoke; he continued speaking slowly. "As you, upon the brow of the cliff gazed, gazed on the sun-set's glory; so *I* gazed upon the young girl's beauty!"

"Ah! ah!" said she, with wild energy, "but I was upon *the brow of the cliff!* the brink of destruction, where a single mis-step would have precipitated me into ruin; and I was pouring my soul out through my eyes, I was entranced until the glory was lost in clouds, the light in darkness. Alas! *wail* for your illustration, Raymond!" and suddenly springing from him she fled up the stairs to her eyrie. He stood looking after her a moment, and then followed her leisurely. He found her in an excited still-

Digitized by Google

ness, gazing "too earnestly for seeing" out upon the bay. He went up to the window, and leaning his arm upon the flap of the escrutoire, looked down at her, looked steadily at her—and spoke:

"Hagar."

She started, turned, impatiently exclaiming, "Can I not escape your eye and voice anywhere, *anywhere?*"

"Why *no*, love, of course not!"

She was turning away—"Nay, pause. Hagar, how long have we been married?"

"I do not exactly know, and I do not want to calculate now; it seems to me much longer than it really is—a long, long time!"

"Something less than six weeks? Is not this a promising beginning?" Hagar suppressed a groan. He drew her away to a lounge, and they sat down. "Hagar, do you remember the night of our first meeting? when I was a youth and you an infant?"

"*Do I not?*"

"Your first words to me—it was at Sophie's wedding party, you recollect—your first words to me formed a *jealous question*, and I knew that you were strong and fierce and jealous, though so little even for your years; and your first question was a *jealous* question."

"You have a good memory."

"I *have!* therefore do not store it with facts that will be likely to injure you in my estimation. Well, to go back to that evening—I loved the little, fierce child—it was piquant to see so much intense fire concentrated in so small a space. I felt that it would be interesting to subdue this fierceness into gentleness. I was called away from home; but I never forgot the interest she gave me. I returned, and the little girl had become a little woman—and was wilder, fiercer, more piquant than ever; she interested me, attracted me more than ever—and I wished to possess her—I do possess her. I wanted her for interest, amusement, occupation, use—not for *torture!* I wish her *esprit malin* to stop just when and where it ceases to be *agreeable*—do you hear, love? For, Hagar, I have extremely keen nerves and senses; as most people of my complexion enjoy a moderate degree of any sort of pleasure thrillingly, but do not like to be shocked and stunned; things that would scarcely act upon a lower organization put me in pain. And now another picture, Hagar. Do you remember the monkey Augustus May brought you from sea, when you were a little girl? You kept it years until my return; you had educated it almost up to human intelligence; and showed it to me with so much pride and pleasure. I was so amused with its antics—not so much with what you had *taught* it as with its *own primal* nature, breaking through all. *Yes, look at me, Hagar!* keep your eye *so*—for I want you to read all in my *soul* that you find upon my *tongue*. You remember the day we stood upon the point of rocks between the river and bay, on the other side; you remember you had your monkey in your arms; you set it down, and I made it bound and bound for a chestnut, while we both laughed at its antics, until the thing, exasperated to anger, sprang upon my chest and set its teeth and claws into my flesh, and then! Ah! you grow pale, proud one! *what then, Hagar?*"

She answered, and spoke low and slowly, as though the words were drawn from her involuntarily. "You tore it from my bosom by the heels, and dashed its brains out on the rocks."

"It was an involuntary impulse, Hagar, deplored, perhaps, the moment after; nevertheless, Hagar, you monkey!" and here he smiled a strange smile,—"be as spirited, fiery, and piquant as you please, but never set your teeth and nails into my flesh *again*—and Hagar!"

"Well?"

"I want a mark of confidence from you. Invite Miss Aguilar to stay with us—do you hear?"

"Yes."

"'Yes,' what is that? Yes ou hear, or yes you will do it?"

"Yes, I hear, and I will do it."

"This day?"

"Yes."

He kissed her forehead, arose, and sauntered out of the room. And Hagar sprang upon her feet with a snap of her teeth, exclaiming, "Powers and principalities of darkness! is this I? is this I? What is this? am I bewitched, enslaved? I—*I—I!* pale, and tremble, and obey—*I!* Come, Hagar!" said she, to herself, "let us go to the glass and see if we have changed as much in person as we have in manner during the last ten minutes!" and she went to the glass and glared at herself. "Would I submit to this, if I did not love him, if I did not want him to love *me?* Raymond! oh! you who looked *so* gentle, so fair—who could think that under those golden lashes, in those soft eyes, lurked such spring lancets! And Rosalia! Was he sincere? or was he self-deceived? or perchance am I mistaken?"

The dinner bell rang, and hastily arranging her dress, she descended the stairs and entered the dining-room. Raymond came forward to meet her, and led her to her seat at the table, whispering as he went,

"Your cheek is flushed, love, and your ringlets a little dishevelled. I am sorry to see that; take time in future, love, even though you should keep people waiting a few minutes; take time to compose yourself and arrange your toilet."

That afternoon Rosalia Aguilar had three distinct invitations to make her home under the room of three distinct friends. She gratefully declined two—that is Emily's and Hagar's, in favor of Captain Wilde and Sophie.

The next Sabbath, the whole family from Heath Hall attended divine service at the parish Church of the Ascension—Rev. Mr. Buncombe in the pulpit. It was to be the last Sunday of their stay. Mrs. Withers's pew, in which sat Hagar, Raymond, Rosalia, Sophie, and Captain Wilde; and Mrs. Buncombe's pew, occupied by herself and Gusty, were the two front pews of the middle aisle, immediately under the pulpit. After the morning service was over, the benediction pronounced, and the congregation had retired, the occupants of these front pews filed out, and placed themselves before the altar in the following order: Captain Wilde, with Sophie on his left hand, and next to her Rosalia; on his right hand, Gusty, while Emily, Hagar, and Raymond were grouped near. The preacher opened his book, and in the holy stillness of the empty church, commenced the marriage rites that were to unite for life Sophie and Augustus; he went on, finished them, the names of bride, bride-

Digitized by Google

groom, and attendants and witnesses were affixed to the register; kisses were given and received; heart-felt, low-toned congratulations breathed, and the little party slowly left the church, got into their saddles, and rode over to Heath Hall, where a small party were assembled to dinner.

Dear girls, have I given you love, courtship, and marriage enough in this and the last? Whatever you may think, there is "more truth than poetry" in the story I am telling you, and more sadness than either.

Gusty rode by the side of Rosalia Aguilar—Rosalia was in one of her softest moods, and tears and smiles and blushes chased each other over her cheeks. She was thinking of "dearest Sophie," and sympathizing with her happiness. Gusty was sighing like the wind in the main-sail. His mother's invitation, backed by his own eloquence, had been inefficient in persuading Rosalia to remain in the neighborhood.

"No, dearest Gusty," she had said, "I should love so much to have you all with me; it grieves me to part with any of you, but you know, Gusty, that I must mind what Sophie says, and Sophie says that I must go with *her;* besides, as I cannot stay with all, I prefer to stay with Sophie and with Captain Wilde, who loves me also."

"See here, Rosalia, I—I—I—"

"Don't cry, Gusty, don't cry—I will write to you every week, and can't you come and see me?"

"*Cry!* am *I* crying?—it's—it's the wind blowing in my eyes that makes them water—pshaw! fiddle-de-dee! *me* cry, indeed!—but, Rosalia—stop—don't ride so fast; let the folks get along before."

"Why?"

"Oh! because—because—because it will tire the *horse*, you know, poor fellow."

"Oh, will it?" said Rosalia, reining up, and falling into a walk.

"Yes, to be sure it will, walk him slow,—there!" and then he rode up close to the side of Rosalia, and said, "Rose, stop, little darling," and she stopped, and turned her gentle face towards him. "Rose, look at me, darling," and she looked straight in his face, with her large innocent eyes. "How do you like me, altogether, Rose?"

"Oh! so much, so dearly, you *know* I do, Gusty!"

"Ah, my seraph!—but, Rose, could you *love* me?"

"Could I, Gusty? Why, I *do* love you dearly."

Then he sank his voice to a low whisper, and said,

"But, loving darling! you love *everybody!*—Raymond and Augustus included."

"But I love you better than them, Gusty—oh, ever so much better. You know I have known you all my life, and never knew them until last week; so good as they are, dear Gusty, and much as I love them, I love *you* the most!"

"Love! love! love! Ah, my little angel, I am afraid you do not love me as I would have you. Do you love me well enough to *marry* me—now—soon? My pay is enough to support us, and mother has consented. Sophie has a good opinion of me, and—and—well! what do you say, my Rosalia?"

She was smiling and blushing.

"Well, Rosalia?"

"Why, it would be too curious! too queer! so funny. Sophie would laugh at us, and all the girls would make fun of us. You know I am nothing but a child yet—but oh! I know you are only joking."

"As the Lord in heaven hears me speak, I never was more in earnest in my life."

"Oh! no, Gusty! not in earnest! I do hope not in earnest."

"As the Lord lives I am, Rosalia—come, Rosalia! I see you will not drive me to despair—you will give me your hand, and instead of going North, you will just cosily settle down here, with mother. Come, put your hand in mine, and I will take that for yes!"

"Oh, I am sorry to vex you, Gusty; indeed I am, dear Gusty, but I can't get married, it is too funny!"

"Do you not love me, then?"

"Yes, indeed I do, Gusty."

"You *love* me, dearest Rose?"

"Yes, indeed I do, Gusty, the angels know I do!"

"Then why not marry me, my sweet love?"

"So! Gusty, I had just as soon marry you as any one else, only I do not like to marry one—"

"Good heavens!—oh, gracious Providence, *hear her!*—she had as lief have me as *anybody else!*" roared Gusty, striking spurs to his horse and making him bound in the air.

The girl grew pale, and hastily exclaimed,

"Well, well! maybe if I was obliged to marry, I would *rather* have you than anybody. Oh! don't scare me so, Gusty! you make me weak all over, and—and—I feel like falling from my saddle!"

And he saw, indeed, that his violence had nearly overwhelmed the delicate girl, who was trembling very much. He rode to her saddle-bow, and said gently,

"Rosalia, I beg your forgiveness; I have startled you by my rudeness; the fact is, Rosalia, I have been accustomed to Hagar, who, with reverence be it said, is as rough as an unripe persimmon, as sour as a lime, and as bitter as an aloe, and she has spoiled me for such gentle society as yours; now compose yourself, Rosalia, and hear me, and believe me when I say that if you refuse my hand—if you leave me here and go to the North—I—well! perhaps I shall not go mad, or blow my brains out, or break my heart, and die, but I shall be utterly wretched, and make every one miserable around me, I *know* I shall! I begin to feel it now. So, Rosalia, I have to propose to you to break this matter to Sophie, or let me do it, and to beg you, if she shall see no improper haste in the project of our marriage, that you will accept me; Rosalia, you make me talk *so* much, darling!—now, Rosalia, what do you say?"

The girl paused, not in reflection, but in hesitation.

"Dearest Rose, you give me so much pain. Rose! Rose!"

"Do I? I did not mean to."

"Will you give a reply, Rose?"

"Wait, Gusty, till I talk to Sophie; but, oh! no, I do not like to, either—it is too queer. You, Gusty, you may talk to her."

"Do you, do you say that, Rose! Tell me!

Digitized by Google

tell me over again, Rose! I may ask your hand of Sophie and Wilde?"

"Yes," whispered Rose, the blood rising to the edges of her hair.

"Oh, glory, hallelujah! God bless you, Rose! Gôd Almighty bless you, Rose. Hey! stop, Lightning!" said he, suddenly jerking the bit, though in fact it was not the horse but Master Gusty that was bounding. "There, I am frightening you again, Rose! Be easy, Lightning!"

"Won't you ride on? Sophie will be waiting for us."

"Yes! yes! my angel Rose," and they cantered on through the forest path. It was the same forest path leading from the village to the church so often mentioned in this story. They overtook Sophie Wilde and their party. Sophie was buried in thought; she was in fact just passing the spot where she had, eight years before, seen the apparition of the wanderer, and now passing the road for the last time, and under her peculiar circumstances, the fact was forcibly recalled to her mind. Rosalia paced up lovingly to her side, and kept there during her ride home.

Soon after dinner Gusty May found an opportunity of taking Sophie aside and making known his wishes. His embarrassment under *all* the circumstances of which *we* are cognisant, you know, was very natural and amusing. Sophie Wilde (I love to call her Sophie Wilde) was not perhaps the person of all others to consult in such a case; it did, however, vaguely dawn upon her mind that a little delay might not be unadvisable in the proposed marriage of a youth of nineteen with a girl of fifteen and a half; so she said dreamily that she would "Talk with Captain Wilde."

Up shot Gusty, exclaiming,

"'*Talk with Captain Wilde!*' 'talk with Captain Wilde;' yes! that's it! that's the tune! 'talk with Captain Wilde.' What's Captain Wilde to do with it? I asked *you*, because she insisted you should be consulted, and you are her little mamma. Seems to me that you have quite unnecessarily elevated him to the throne. 'Captain Wilde!' he's a great fellow, isn't he? Captain Fiddlestick's end! I should just like to hear *him* object—I just *should*. Shouldn't be surprised though if he didn't. 'Talk to Captain Wilde!' oh! *de*-cidedly. *She* said 'Talk to Sophie,' you say, 'Talk to Captain Wilde,' *he'll* 'talk' to Parson Buncombe; and while you are all 'talk'-ing, my prospect of getting a pair of white kid gloves grows

"'Small by degrees and beautifully less!'"

exclaimed Gusty, ranting up and down the piazza, and flinging his coat-tails about. "I was born under the lost pleiad! I *know* I was! to be always crossed in love! to be hammered into a poet or something by hard blows! I be hanged if I will. I'm to be put in the still as roses are, and the essence of soul, the double extract of soul distilled from me by fire, while flesh and muscle, life and health shrivel up like rose leaves in the heat! No, I be hanged if I will. Cast me into the furnace and see if I don't turn out to be gunpowder, and blow somebody up! or spirit-gas, and set some one on fire! *that's* all!" and blowing, he sat down.

"Look here, my dear Gusty," said our bride, "don't talk nonsense. You have a long leave of absence; come! go with us North. You indeed have the best excuse; you may be said to be in duty bound to go, as our groomsman, and in that capacity you must constantly attend Rosalia, and who knows, you may be appointed to our ship; the set of officers is not yet complete."

"So I may! oh, God bless you, Sophie, it took just *you* to think of that! though you may not be as sensible as mother, or as brilliant as Hagar—yet you are better. I wish the comparative had been *gooder* than *either* of them! anything that is to make anybody happy, dear Sophie! I shall not leave it to 'who knows' and 'perhaps,' I shall beg uncle to get me appointed to his ship, if he can—where is he? I am going to him! in the meantime consider me enlisted for this Northern bridal cruise," and off he went to seek Captain Wilde.

I leave it to any gentleman or lady present whether it was in Captain Wilde's power just that day to look rationally, sensibly, coldly, upon a young lover's passion.

"Why, Gusty, my boy," he said, "you know very well that I have very little influence; however, I will exert that in procuring your appointment to my ship, and Gusty, in the meantime come on with us and remain until you receive orders somewhere. Rosalia is a treasure, and if I had the power of bestowing her, I do not know to whom I could give her with so much pleasure as yourself. But you must wait, Gusty, for a year or two—you are both somewhat too young to think of this marriage yet a while."

"Why, uncle, this 'wait'-ing might be endurable if the time were passed with you all, and in daily company of Rosalia, to be sure."

This arrangement was finally concluded. And Emily, who loved Rosalia, and preferred her above all others as a future daughter-in-law, readily consented to forego the society of her son for the present, merely saying—

"*When* you marry, if you ever marry Rosalia, you must bring her home here and leave her with me while you are at sea, Gusty, and that is the only condition upon which I can consent to part with you, Gusty, for this term."

Of course Gusty consented and promised.

"And so, my little dove-eyed darling is scarcely out of school, before she is betrothed—do you know the meaning of your vows, my little love?" asked Sophie, very seriously, the same afternoon as Rosalia nestled on a stool at her feet. And Rose dropped her blushing face in the lap of Sophie, and was silent. "Do you?—tell me, Rose?"

"Dear Sophie, I had rather not get married—only, you know, poor Gusty, it would be a pity to hurt his feelings!"

"You child!"

"But, Sophie, I am not—not betrothed, as you suppose—no indeed, I gave no positive answer until I could hear what you would have to say."

"You did not!" said Sophie, suddenly. "Oh, then, my dear Rose, I beg—I entreat that you

Digitized by Google

will bind yourself by no rash vows now—wait—you are heart-whole yet—wait—Gusty is going on with us—you will see more of him—he of you—and you will both find out whether you are fitted for each other. Will you promise me not to engage your hand ever without my consent, Rose?"

"Dear Sophie, to be sure I will—I never once thought of doing otherwise."

This was perfectly easy for Rose, for her own inclinations were uninterested in the matter.

Breaking up an old home, the home of many years—I had nearly said centuries, is not like a modern city May day flitting. A home like old Heath Hall, with its accumulations, its secretions of many years and many hearts, with its innumerable old closets, cupboards, wardrobes, escrutoires, and "old oak chests," with their inexhaustible treasures, relics, and curiosities—from the doublet and hose that the founder of the American branch of the family wore—with his point and ruffles and bonnet and plume—to the cocked hat and rusty sword of great-great-grandfather, and the hooped petticoat and high heeled shoes of his wife—from the first baby cap that the first American Churchill baby wore, to the lock of grey hair that was cut from his coffined head just before the lid was screwed down—from the veil that fell around the maiden at her bridal to the cap the grandmother died in—from the bullet extracted from the fiery-hearted son who had perished in battle, to the clerical black silk gown his gentle bosomed brother had worn in his ministry when he married, christened or blessed. Truly the organ of veneration must be largely developed in these old Maryland and Virginian families—all things linked with family associations are relics it would be little short of sacrilege to destroy. The cast off bridal wreath and veil that a northern or a city belle would generously and properly bestow upon some young sister or cousin, is gently lifted from her daughter's brow by a Maryland mother—reverentially lifted as you have seen a minister raise the cloth from a communion table, and laid away a sacred treasure, a relic to be handled with awe and love by the children in future ages. The wardrobe of the dead that many northern and city families send to the proper destination, the backs of the ragged living, in Maryland and Virginia is carefully collected and packed away in chests and locked, and hermetically sealed as if were to moulder away to dust in long years. These old houses—how the very smell of their musty mysterious old closets and closely shaded rooms, for dreaming carries us back to the days when people did not understand that ventilation was necessary to health, to the days when we lay across grandmother's soft lap, watching through our winking eyes grandmother's dear good face, and, vibrating between angel dream land and her capped and spectacled face, dimly wondered what we were, and slipped from this vague feeling into sleep. These old houses have no antiquities carrying us back to the very ancient feudal times, it is true; but they have that which comes more warmly, *so* warmly! home to the heart, all the signs of *long inhabitedness*. The old windows may creak in the wintry blast, and the wind whistle up from crevices at the very foot of the old mantel-pieces beside the blazing hickory fire, yet the heart is all the warmer for its old age, because grandfather and grandmother lived there and *their* grandparents before them. These old houses scattered at wide intervals up and down the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and under the Easterly shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and in and out among the hills and through the forests between them—these old houses, spotting the verdure of new settlements like iron-mould—these old houses, many of them still inhabited by the old families, while both decay together, still blossoming out occasionally with young life, young children, remind me strongly of old mouldering tombs from which fresh blooming flowers are springing.

"Let's leave all things just *so*, Hagar, love," said Sophie, as the two were making a tour of the old Hall, opening and examining old closets and chests with a view of determining what should be taken, what left, what burnt and what given away. "We will lock up all the rest without examination. I have not nerves for it, Hagar. It is like dissecting a heart, to explore the treasures and memorials and relics of the long ago dead. Let us leave them so."

"Let's make a general bonfire of them," said Hagar, "I never like these relics, they come across me unpleasantly, very—why should people accumulate them—storing up pangs against some day of pangs. 'Let the dead past bury its dead;' *en avant* is my motto.

Sophie looked at her with her brown eyes dilating in reverie.

"Perhaps you are right after all—these relics awaken mournful, not to say maudlin feelings that might sleep but for their sight; nevertheless, *I* could not destroy these things, neither can I consent to their destruction."

It was finally agreed in consultation that all things should remain just as they were, that the Hall should be closed, and left in charge of old Cumbo and Tarquinius.

"Where are you going, Hagar?" said Raymond, as she sauntered from the breakfast-room off into the yard.

"To see Starlight. I have not seen him since our marriage, and I was accustomed to go to his stall every morning when Tarquinius carried his oats."

"Why did you not ask me to attend you?" inquired Raymond, as he drew her hand under his arm.

"Because, Mr. Raymond," flashed Hagar's eyes and teeth, "I love to shake you *off* some time! when you set like a trammel—besides you do not like Starlight."

Raymond replied by drawing her arm closer and holding her hand tighter, while her pointers, Remus and Romulus, seeing her, sprang to her, bounded around her, and she stopped to caress them with her free hand. Raymond an instant looked annoyed, then raising the loaded end of his riding-whip, struck them away. Hagar snatched her hand from his arm, and all the fire of her race and nation was burning in the indignant gaze she flashed upon his brow that still remained unfurrowed by a frown in its superb calmness.

"Well, Hagar, I am not scathed, blasted by that lightning stroke, am I? Nonsense, Ha-

Digitized by Google

gar, do you suppose I am going to permit a hand I love to kiss to be licked over by those two curs?—pooh! go wash it."

"They are *not* curs, they are fine splendid pointers! Look at their shining black coats and eyes like coals! and their *love* has more generous disinterestedness than—" And here she paused, her expiring flash of spirit died out beneath the steady inquiring gaze of the soft, deep blue eyes, striking up through which came a will, a purpose, the strength of which was dimly guessed from the depths from which it seemed to come.

"Than *what*, Hagar?"

"Nothing!" said Hagar, as her high heart-throbbing subsided. He drew her arm again within his own, and they proceeded to the stables. At the sight of his mistress, Starlight neighed loud for joy, and breaking away, cantered up to meet her, pawed the ground, stretched out his head, and couched it in the open palms she held to receive it. Hagar smiled in his eyes, full of the earnestness she could not speak, and stroking his jet black neck, let him lay his chin upon her shoulders alternately, and rub his mouth upon her neck and cheek, snorting with joy between times.

"See, Raymond! see," she said, with her momentary anger all conjured away. "See how the very *want* of the gift of speech makes his eyes and motions so eloquent! See how glad he is to see me! don't I understand you, Starlight? and don't you know every word I am saying?" said she, caressing him.

But now her eyes fell upon Raymond, who was standing with folded arms, curling lip, and scornful eyes, regarding her.

"Why do you look at me in that way, Raymond?"

"You have no refinement, no delicacy. Your dress pawed over and soiled by your canine pets—your ringlets snuffed at, and your neck rubbed by the nose of your pony. I am glad that in a few days I shall be able to remove you from all these things."

"But I wish to take Starlight and Remus and Romulus with me," said Hagar, as she turned away from the stable, and they sauntered on.

"You cannot do so."

"Why?" she asked, anxiously.

"I do not like dogs and horses myself, and I very much *dis*like your attachment to them, and I utterly disapprove of your use of them; when you cannot walk there are carriages to be had!"

"You never told me that you disapproved of my habits before!"

"I had no right to *express* it before, and yet you learned it from my silence, and now I say it explicitly, and expect that my tastes be consulted in the matter."

"And you have no right to express it *now!* sir," exclaimed the mad girl, with the fire flaming in her eyes. "No right to express it *now! what* right have you *now*, more than you ever had over me? None that I acknowledge! None that I will bear to have you assume! None, Raymond! *none!* All love! all compliance that I yield you now I would have yielded you before! and you know it! you know it! of my own free will! of my own glorious free will!—not from constraint! God in Heaven! you exasperate—you madden me—by attempts at constraint! Raymond! what do you mean by this? I do not like it. No! I will turn away, I will not look at your cold, spirit-killing eyes. I will not let your cold, damping, implacable will extinguish my life and soul as the rain puts out the fire. *I* have a will! and tastes, and habits, and propensities! and loves and hates! yes, and conscience! that all go to make up the sum total of a separate individuality! a distinct life! for which *I alone* am accountable, and *only* to God! How weak and worthless would my obedience to God be if it were fettered through a submission to *any* lower will. No, I will *not* bear to have you assume any right over my freedom of action, and I shall take my favorites with me to the North."

A sarcastic smile fluttered around the beautiful lips and gleamed under the golden eyelashes of Raymond Withers as he slightly raised his hat from his head with a mock bow, and sauntered away from her side, quoting for her benefit the very last clause of Genesis iii. and 16. It only needed his sarcasm to exasperate the girl to phrensy. She snapped and ground her teeth together, and stamped with both little feet, springing to the ground as though they would take root there—while anger rocked and flamed to and fro in her bosom like a sea of fire lashing its shores. Suddenly—veiling her flashing eyes and setting her gleaming teeth with a look of resolution, she went to the stables and calling Tarquinius, bade him saddle Starlight.

"We will have another day together, my old friends," said she, as the horse neighed joyously, and the dogs bounded around her each in intelligent anticipation; and in ten minutes from this Hagar was flying over the heath towards the forest attended by her favorites.

The sun was setting in golden glory as Hagar rode into the yard at Heath Hall, sprang from her horse, and throwing the reins to Tarquinius walked leisurely towards the house, smiled and bowed salutation to the company assembled to enjoy the evening air in the piazza, and passed on into the Hall—Sophie followed her, and with the tears welling up to her eyes exclaimed,

"Oh! Hagar, what have you done?"

Hagar threw up her little glittering head of ringlets and replied with laughing defiance,

"I have been taking one of my old days among the hills! I wished to feel my freedom a little, that is all! I have been galled by the too close pressure of my chains lately, and have broken them through for once, that's all."

"How will you meet Raymond after this escapade?" said she, sadly.

"Nonsense, Sophie, how will he meet *me?*" and she ran up stairs.

"Be quick, dear, trying Hagar, tea is nearly ready," said Sophie, gazing earnestly after her—then with a second thought, inspired by this second and closer glance, Sophie went up stairs to her room, found her standing leaning her elbow on her dressing table, while her forehead rested upon the palm of her hand, and her long glittering ringlets fell half way to her girdle—her little figure was visibly throbbing with emotion. Sophie went and took the hand that was hanging down; it was burning, hot, and dry.

"Hagar!"

"Well?"

"You are wretched, poor child, and indeed I do not wonder. Hagar, will you take my advice?"

Digitized by Google

"What is it?"

"*Tell* your husband when you meet him that you are so—*you* have sinned, Hagar, and *you* must atone for your sin; lay your small hand gently on his arm, and look into his face, catch his eyes, and ask him to forgive you."

"WHAT!" snapped the proud girl, bounding like a little bomb-shell; "hold out my wrists humbly for the gyves, and ask my master please to fasten them on again! No! may I die if I do!"

"Oh! don't look at it in that light, Hagar; you have wronged, outraged, insulted Raymond."

"Did he tell you so?" sneered Hagar.

"Can I not see it, Hagar? No, he did not tell me so—do you not know enough of Raymond's proud and fastidious nature to see that he *could* not tell me so, Hagar? No, poor misguided child, your day's absence was enough. Come, Hagar, seek a reconciliation with him—you *have* been wrong—say so to him at once. You will have not a moment's peace until you are reconciled to your husband—seek that reconciliation at any price of your own sinful pride."

"I will not! cannot!"

"But, Hagar, you *do* regret this, you suffer torture."

"I can *bear* torture! but not humiliation! degradation!"

"Alas! look at you, the very flame of mental fever flickering through your cheeks and eyes—the freshness of your lips scorched by the dry heat of your breath. What a day you have had to-day, Hagar! how much your defiance has cost you! Come, come, bathe your eyes; after tea I will, if I can, talk with you again. You will be wise."

The supper bell rang, and Sophie, with a hasty charge to Hagar to make her toilet quickly, arose and left the room. And Hagar sprang to her feet with a determination to look very regal, happy, and defiant. She bathed her burning eyes and brow, but without cooling their fever. She smoothed her long glittering ringlets, and collected them under a jewelled comb. She changed her black riding-dress for a crimson satin, with full and falling sleeves, fastened a ruby bracelet on her slender but rounded arm, and descended the stairs, trying to draw her heart up blithe and high; she entered the drawing-room with head erect, expanded brow, and elastic step, and was passing on proudly alone, behind the company, who were going to the supper room, when quickly and softly at her side was Raymond, his graceful head, with its wavy golden hair, bending forward, smiling up into her face; his soft eyes radiant under their golden lashes, and his delicate hand seeking hers, to draw it through his arm, just as if nothing had happened. Her own Raymond!—her pride was disarmed in a moment. Sunbright was the smile of surprise, joy, love, and gratitude she flashed up in his gentle face, and suddenly it softened into tenderness; how could she have defied a gentle soul like his?—in truth, she would have given everything she possessed on earth, except Remus, Romulus, and Starlight, to have blotted out for ever the offence of the day. She had not expected this; she had prepared herself to defy the storm, not the sunshine, and her defences were all melted off. She was subdued, and quietly and generously resolved in her own mind not to shock and wound his fastidious delicacy again, and so they sat down to supper. The neighborhood gossip of a tea-table occupied the company. But Hagar continued to watch Raymond with a new feeling, new interest; it seemed his character was now constantly unfolding itself to her; new leaf after leaf was turned; she watched him covertly but closely. His manner was just precisely as usual; and, though she often caught his full eyes, not the slightest consciousness of remembering that anything unpleasant had occurred was to be detected in their glance. His countenance and manner wore their usual air of graceful self-possession and elegant repose, and she would have thought that, indeed, the occurrence of the day had dropped from his memory, but that once, quickly, under his breath, he had said, "Your restlessness of manner, your anxiety of expression, will draw attention—be at ease."

"Be at ease"—these words, though spoken in the softest key, and with the sweetest smile, somehow did not set her at ease; and "You will draw attention," raised an anxiety that she had not felt before. Was it the dislike of drawing attention?—but she would wait. Oh, how she longed for the stupid evening to be over; it is so hard to bear calmly, cheerfully, a toothache or a heart-ache in company. It was long before they left the tea-table, and then it was long before they got ready to go home, and after they were all in their saddles and in their carriages on the road, it was long before Sophie's smiling good-night broke up the family circle for the evening. Sophie left the room with a congratulatory smile to Hagar, happy in the thought that their quarrel was made up. Raymond followed her, smiling, to the door, opened it, bowed her out, closed it, and returned; then with a sudden impulse went back, re-opened it, and passed out.

Hagar awaited his return half an hour, and then sought her chamber. She expected him joyously, yet with a little undefinable anxiety. At last she heard his steps ascending the stairs, he opened the door, and came in; she turned quickly, and going to meet him, holding out both hands, exclaimed,

"Dearest Raymond, I am so glad that we are alone, together at last, my heart has been ready to burst all the—" She stopped short, and gazed in surprise at him. How changed his aspect! was it the same Raymond that an hour ago was smiling, bowing, glancing, gliding through the lighted drawing-rooms? He stood with folded arms and curling lip; his cold eye crawling over her from head to foot, yet so fascinating in his beautiful scorn, that she could have uttered a death-cry of anguish, as love and pride tugged at her heart-strings. He passed her and threw himself upon a lounge. She had been prepared for this scorn and anger three hours before, but she was not now—not after having been subdued by soft smiles, sweet words, and gentle tones, that she had received in all trust—no, not now—the touch of the soft fingers that had sought and pressed her hand in drawing it through his arm; the touch of those soft fingers was yet quivering on *her* fingers; the rays of those gentle eyes were yet beaming in *her* eyes; the tones of that low, love-pitched voice yet

Digitized by Google

breathing in her ear—no, she could not believe in this harshness, at *least* she could not bear it. He was now sitting on the lounge, making entries in a note-book, with his usual air of elegant ease. She looked at him an instant, and then going up to him she stood before him; he continued his writing, without looking up; the flame flickered in and out upon her dark cheek; soon she dropped both hands upon his shoulders, and dropped her proud head until the long glittering ringlets fell each side of his cheeks, and sitting down beside him and dropping her face upon his bosom, she whispered softly,

"Raymond, make friends with me! I will do anything in the world you wish me to do—come! I will leave undone all you wish me so to leave, if you will make friends with me again;" and a tearless heart-sob breaking from her lips showed how great had been the pang of her vanquished pride.

He lifted her head from its resting-place, smoothed back the ringlets of her hair, and holding her face between the palms of his hands, gazed smilingly into her eyes, with a look, half of love, half triumph, and said,

"You will? but then your 'separate soul—will—individuality'—what are you to do with it all? Answer me—I want a literal reply, in words—"

"I don't know!—how do I know?—don't seek to humble me, dear Raymond—I am tortured!—tortured!—tortured!"

"Tortured?"

"Yes!—yes!" exclaimed she, wildly,—"*tortured!*"

"Who tortures you, my piquant little love, my little vial of sal-volatile?" said he, condescendingly, caressing her.

"You do, Raymond!—and myself!—myself tortures me!"

"Why, so it seems."

"Yes, Raymond, understand me, and help me to understand myself. I only lately began to know myself. I am a strange blending of pride and aspiration!—and of love, and through love, fear!—the eagle and the dove!—alas, bear with me!—hold my throbbing temples between your cool hands, Raymond—*your* hands are *always* cool—so!—now calmly, I do not know that there is anything to make me wild, or angry, just now—yet these clashing and conflicting elements do so war in my nature—listen, Raymond! when you angered me this morning, and left me, the aroused passion of my soul heaved and set like the sea in a storm, leaping from its bed and lashing the shores! I could not have believed it possible that you *could* have angered me so—or being angered so, that I could have got over it so; and now that is gone, and—never wound my poor dove because my eagle has stuck her beak and claws into you—"

"No, love, the dove shall never be wounded, but *the claws and wings of the eagle shall be clipped*," said he, looking steadily in her anguished eyes. "Don't reply to me yet, Hagar, you are about to say something that will make more trouble between us."

Then with a dry sob and gasp, Hagar's heart shrank into silence, and he smiled to see it, and all this while he was lightly caressing her—running his fair fingers through her glossy hair, and kissing her lips from time to time. At last she said—

"I have been thinking what to do with my favorites, Starlight and the pointers."

"And has your unassisted wisdom arrived at any conclusion, my love?"

"Yes, I will leave them here, in the care of Tarquinius, for a while; then, perhaps, after a while, when we get settled, you will not object to have them."

"I am sorry, love, that our thoughts did not happen to run in the same channel, very sorry. I made a sale of the horse and dogs to Gardiner Green, this morning, while you were taking your last ride with them, and to-night, after you came home, I sent them over to his farm by Tarquinius."

"NO!" exclaimed Hagar, starting violently. He held her tightly, gently compressing his arm about her waist, and replied, softly,

"Yes, love—nay, do not start and struggle, I cannot spare you, yet—yes, love, they are sold."

"*My* horse!—*mine?*—*my own!*—my dear Starlight!—and my dogs—and without my leave!"

"Come, come!—come, come! be still, Hagar, no phrensy," said he, smilingly, tauntingly caressing her, while a gentle, cruel strength struck out from the pressure of the soft arms that held her in a fast embrace; "if your eagle flaps its wings and beats its cage so violently, I am afraid clipping its pinions and claws will not be enough—I am afraid I shall have to crush it altogether," said he, looking down into her eyes.

She ceased to struggle, and dropped her hands clasped upon her lap—dropped her head upon her chest, while the color all faded from her cheeks, and the light from her eyes.

"Hagar!"

"Well!"

"What is the matter, love?"

"*What you please* shall be the matter!" exclaimed she, laughing bitterly, while light and color suddenly flashed back into her sparkling face.

"Come, love, you are a spirited little thing, but you will be docile by and by, and then—"

"I wish you joy of your automaton!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FORSAKEN HOUSE.

"Gloom is upon thy lonely hearth,
Oh, silent house! once filled with mirth,
Sorrow is in the breezy sound
Of thy tall poplars whispering round."

HEMANS.

THE family met at breakfast the morning succeeding the events of the last chapter. The family—that is, with the exception of Rosalia, who had been spending a week at Grove Cottage, consoling Emily for the disappointment of losing her company for the winter, by remaining with her as long as possible, and indeed up to the day of the proposed departure. Hagar entered the breakfast room, escorted, as usual,

Digitized by Google

with the gentle and assiduous attention always given her, in public, by her husband. He led her to her place, and seated her with a graceful bow and sweet smile, and then assumed his own chair—smiling the morning salutation to Captain Wilde, who just entered the room. But Sophie looked at Hagar,—looked at her in astonishment. The spirited, springy little figure was almost languid, though she sat erect; the healthy crimson glow of her dark complexion had concentrated in a circumscribed purple spot on her sheek, leaving her contracted brow and quivering lip pallid; her strained glance expressed a mingled anguish and defiance. And then Sophie's glance turned off from Hagar to Raymond; but his fine brow was perfectly smooth, his eyes smiling and his lips composed as he received the cup of coffee from the waiter held by Tarquinius. Sophie was so disturbed, upon the whole, that she could not eat her breakfast. This was the last day of their stay at Heath Hall. The packet that was to convey them to Baltimore was moored under the shadow of the promontory. Immediately after breakfast, both gentlemen left the house to superintend the removal of their baggage. Hagar arose from the table and went into the large old drawing-room, Sophie's whilom school-room. Sophie, leaving her table in charge of the servants, followed her. She was walking uneasily about the floor, and seeing Sophie enter, she paused before the window. Sophie stole gently to her side, and passing her soft arms over the girl's shoulder, stooped forward and looked seriously and lovingly into her anguished face, as she murmured in her low, sweet voice,

"I must not ask you *now*, Hagar, my former question of 'What is the matter between you and Raymond?' but let me comfort you in some way. Oh, it is dreadful, indeed, my love, that you, a wife of scarcely two months—but I will say nothing of that—only I see," said she, dropping her voice very low, "it is your *pride*, Hagar—don't start, love, or repulse me, for you know we shall be separated very soon—it is your *pride*, love, that rebels against a rule every way gentle, just, and reasonable. Subdue it, Hagar. Your husband has been educated among the refinements of cultivated city society. He, himself, perhaps, among the most fastidious of that class. His taste is offended, his delicacy shocked by your wildness."

"He knew all this before. Why did he mar—"

"Hush! hush! Hagar! Never think such thoughts—ask such questions. He loves you, Hagar—has loved you long with a constancy I have never seen equalled but in one instance. He loved you—let me speak plainly, Hagar, for your sake and his—he loved you when you were a very *un*lovely child—at least to every one but me.—Well, he loved you, and sought and gained your love. You gave yourself away to him, and now he very naturally expects you to conform your manners to his tastes. Hagar, if liberty were dearer to you than love, you should never have given yourself to a husband. But that is not so—you know it—it is only your struggle, now—and, Hagar, this struggle, this resistance of your pride, *must cease*. Listen! Oh, Hagar!" said she, with unaccustomed energy, "listen to me—to *me*. I love you, and have no possible interest except your own welfare, in what I say to you. Your pride must be subdued—it must!—*must!* If you do not subdue it *yourself*, *he* will, with cruel pain to you. Raymond's demands are all reasonable; such requirements are usual—in your case any man would make them—but in one thing Raymond differs from most men that I know—in the possession of an indomitable WILL. In my long acquaintance with him, when my faculties were mature, and yours in the green bud, I have had an opportunity of seeing and knowing this. I am afraid *you* have mistaken him—with all his fair complexion and golden hair; in that beautiful form lives calmly an immensity of force, an eternity of purpose, almost omnipotent in its repose, and that it would be vain to look for in more impetuous, seemingly stronger natures; a power that is calmly, silently surrounding you. You feel it—do not struggle against it—you cannot overcome it, cannot escape from it, and it will never be withdrawn—it will close around you.—Yield gracefully to it! To your submission it will be a loving embrace—to your proud resistance it will be a galling chain; cease the struggle, Hagar, and be still."

"Never! never! never!" exclaimed the proud girl, while her brow flushed to crimson as by the smite of shame.

"But you have a traitor in your bosom that continually betrays you; or rather, I should say, your husband holds your heart-strings in his hand. You love him—yes, Hagar, *him* only, of all the world! You do not love me, or anybody else. From infancy the stream of your affections has run in one deep and narrow channel. Let that be checked, and the waves, turned to flame, will roll back upon your heart consuming it. Why, see, Hagar, see! when your wills clash, your pride is in arms—you oppose him, defy him, and he meets such defiance with a calm, quiet strength, not yielding an inch, and you suffer, as you are suffering now. Why suffer, Hagar? Tame that wild heart of yours. Hagar, the great secret of the power he possesses over you is this: he is calm, while you are impetuous—he can control *himself*, and thereby *you*—he can stifle, as you can not, that 'mighty hunger of the heart,' that craves a return of love—he can look coldly, sternly on you for days, weeks, while his very soul wails for your love. You cannot do this yourself, or bear it from him long; in a word, dear Hagar, you have neither might nor right on your side."

During all this speech Hagar had been standing with her face to the window, with her eyes burning and burning through the glass, and Sophie had been standing by her side with her arm around her waist caressingly.

"Come, Hagar!" she whispered low, "let me confide to you some of my own feelings," and while she spoke she slightly smiled, her voice slightly quivered as with bashfulness or happiness, and the rose clouds rolled up over her cheeks, and even flushed her brow,—"I love my husband so much, so much, so much, with a fulness of tenderness that it seems to me could not be expressed, except by suffering something—sacrificing something for his sake. I am sure sometimes I wish he would ask me to do something naturally repugnant to my feelings, that I

Digitized by Google

might have one opportunity of showing him how much I do love; to give up my very dearest wish for his pleasure would give me exquisite joy—a joy that I crave. I do not comprehend this, dear, but so it is."

"Oh, *I* comprehend it, Sophie, perfectly; it is the very same principle that led the saints ages ago to scourge and starve themselves to testify their love to God—God forgive them the blasphemy! You, Sophie, have a propensity to worship, and a very decided vocation for martyrdom, which, unfortunately, under existing circumstances, *I* have not!" sneered the scornful girl.

Sophie's brow was crimson now, and the tears swam in her eyes an instant, and she remained silent. At last she said,

"Hagar, I must go away now; I have some arrangements to make for old Cumbo before we go. But before I leave you, Hagar, let me say again, you love your husband, and he loves you; he can stifle his affection, you cannot yours; his will is strong and fixed, yours impulsive and erratic. Your tastes and habits are in some respects opposed, and he requires you to conform yours to his; and, Hagar, you will have to yield—to love now, or to force, without love, hereafter. Yield now, dear, yield. There is no degradation in making a sacrifice to love."

The high-spirited girl turned flashing around upon her—pride and scorn seemed sparkling, scintillating from face and figure, by glance and gesture.

"Yes, there is degradation in sacrificing *freedom* to love—freedom to *anything* but God's law!"

Sophie paused, as if in doubt whether to go on, or to return and speak again. Finally she went out.

Rosalia returned that evening, accompanied by Gusty and the Buncombes. The family expected to leave Heath Hall the next morning, after an early breakfast. The Buncombes were to remain all night to see them off, and to shut up the house after their departure. Rosalia happened soon to perceive the cloud upon Hagar's brow, and watching her attentively, saw that there was something wrong between her and Raymond; and the simple girl, remarking that *her* brow was angry and *his* serene, assumed immediately that he was the injured party, and so, through her benevolence, it happened quite naturally that her voice and smile softened into more than kindliness, into sisterly affection as she frequently addressed him. What a contrast to Hagar's dark brow, curled lip, and bitter tones! It was morning and midnight, sunshine and storm, discord and harmony, fierceness and gentleness, scorn and reverence, hate and love—I had nearly said Heaven and Hell contrasted.

That evening! To Hagar it was an evening to remember, to date from. While she sat there watching the innocent, the childlike maiden, with her gentle beauty and winning grace, smiling so sweetly, kindly, in Raymond's face, lighting his countenance up with *real* and not conventional smiles, her mind flew back to the past, and all her childhood came before her; she recalled the day of Rosalia's arrival at the Hall, and recollected how, from that day, she had drawn away all the love of the household from herself; she remembered that lately Augustus May had well nigh adored her, until the beauty and tenderness of Rosalia stole his heart away—and now! now! now!—oh "*that* way madness lay"—she watched them covertly through her tortured eyes, and with a gnawing pain at the heart—distinct as any physical pain, sharp as though a scorpion living there stung it to agony. Thus the seeds of evil, sown in her heart ten years before, were springing up into a thorn tree, that, lacerating her own bosom, should wound all near her. And Rosalia, too, with all her sweet, endearing qualities, she was vain, and often selfish. It was difficult to perceive this in the dear girl whose caressing hands and tender eyes seemed always pleading for your love.

The next morning early the family assembled at the breakfast table for the last time at Heath Hall. And that last breakfast was over, and they arose and went down to the beach under the promontory, where the packet lay already laden with their personal effects. They reached the water's edge, took an affectionate leave of Emily and Mr. Buncombe, entered the boat that lay waiting to receive them, and were rowed to the packet. As soon as she had seen them safely embarked, and the vessel on her way, Emily took her husband's arm, saying,

"Come, let us return; we have enough to do to close up everything at the Hall, for one day."

The packet wended on her way, in time reaching Baltimore, where another vessel, bound for New York, received them.

At the end of a week from leaving Churchill's Point, they arrived safely in New York harbor, where the U. S. store ship Rainbow waited to receive Captain Wilde and his party.

Before entering upon the new scenes and deeper life of our story, let me recall distinctly the facts of history, and daguerreotype a set of pictures upon which the sun shone on Saturday, the 28th of September, 18—. First:

CHURCHILL'S POINT—HEATH HALL.

On Saturday, the 28th of September, the sun shone down on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, as they washed sleepily up towards the shore; on the lazy and shabby little village of Churchill's Point, with its steep-roofed old houses, with its small interests and dead-alive look; upon the burnished surface of the heath bronzing under the dry heat; upon the changing foliage of the distant forest dropping its leaves—and the sun shone down warm and still upon the dark red crumbling walls, the closed doors and boarded windows of the old Hall, and the tall dark poplar trees that waved like funeral plumes around it. Old Cumbo sat in the kitchen door, with the accustomed red handkerchief tied over her white and woolly hair, while her face, black, hard, and seamed with wrinkles, like an Indian walnut, was bent over her work, the tying up of dried herbs—fit guardian of such a desolation. It was a still, deserted scene, filled with low sad music—the waters moaned as they washed the shore—the wind sighed in the distant forest, and

Digitized by Google

rushing over the heath, wailed through the poplar trees that rocked to and fro round the deserted house. Nature seemed to mourn the loss of the joyous worshipper, the exultant young life that had vanished from the scene. Keep this picture in your mind for a while, for years passed and brought no change, but change of seasons, to it.

GROVE COTTAGE.

The same morning the sun shone upon the Grove, refulgent in its still autumn glory, and falling upon the dry leaves and red berries of the rose trees, stole into the quiet parlor of the Cottage, still glittering in its sober, polished steel-like splendor, and smiled a morning smile upon the parson and his calm wife, sitting within. They were seated at opposite sides of a round table. The parson with his manuscript upon a small portable writing-desk, busy in correcting his sermons for the next day, while he carried on a desultory chat with his wife. Emily with her work-box before her, embroidering a very minute cap, and sustaining at her leisure her part in the quiet conversation. There they sat with no children to bind them together, yet loving and contented as a pair of partridges. They could not work apart, and the parson had abandoned his well appointed study and handsome writing-table, and Emily had forsaken her elegant work-stand, and he had brought his manuscript, and she had brought her sewing to the small, round table, large enough, though, for the convenience of loving partners. And every day as soon as he arose, the sun looked full through the front window and laughed good morning, and every evening he glanced obliquely through the end window and smiled good night, with a promise to return. Remember this picture also, dear reader; for years passed away and brought no change to the Buncombes, except a baby to Emily, a little girl, born when she was thirty-seven, and two grey hairs to the parson, which Emily kissed when she saw them.

THE U. S. STORE SHIP RAINBOW.

The sun arose the same day upon the harbor, shipping, and city of New York, upon Brooklyn and its Navy Yard, and upon the store ship Rainbow stationed there, and shining down upon the snowy sails, the well polished deck, the varnished tarpaulin hats and blue jackets of the sailors, the red coats and glittering bayoneted muskets of the marines, upon the flashing epaulets of the officers, at last stole down the gangway into the captain's cabin, where around an elegantly appointed breakfast sat our party from Heath Hall, in the following order: Sophie at the head of the table, blushingly doing the honors of the coffee and tea—on her left sat Hagar, with Raymond by her side—on her right sat Rosalia, and next below her Gusty; then came several young officers of the crew, and at the foot of the table Captain Wilde presided over the dish before him. It was a novel sight and scene for our visitors. Hagar's lightning eyes and apprehension had taken in all the wonders of the ship at a glance, and she had no more to learn and nothing to wonder at. Sophie seemed to defer her curiosity and govern her glances, until the absence of her guests and the settlement of herself and effects, gave her full opportunity of satisfying it. But Rosalia seemed as though her eyes would never weary of wandering over the strange new scene. Captain Wilde was in the finest spirits, as well he might be; Raymond serene as usual—but poor Gusty looked cloudy. A disappointment had overshadowed him. Another passed-midshipman was appointed to the Rainbow, and he was ordered to sea, and to sail in five weeks, for a voyage of three years. So Gusty was cast down, as well *he* might be. Rosalia, with her sweet benevolence, was doing all that in her lay to soothe and comfort him. She promised to marry him when he came back; she would have promised anything in the world to have raised his spirits; and she continued to remind him that at least they had five weeks to spend together yet—a long, long time, she said; and at last Gusty got over the first shock of his disappointment, and became cheerful. Forget this picture as quickly as you please, for it changed and vanished like the shifting combinations of the kaleidoscope, and was never re-produced.

Immediately after breakfast, Raymond and Hagar took leave of their friends, and entered a steamboat bound up the river.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RIALTO.

"Amongst the hills,
Seest thou not where the villa stands? The moonbeam
Strikes on the granite column, and mountains
Rise sheltering round it."

LADY FLORA HASTINGS.

THE sun was setting on the evening of the third day from their departure from New York, as Mr. and Mrs. Withers stood upon the deck of the steamboat Venture, and watched the approach of a village on the eastern bank of the Hudson. It was a village of considerable importance as to size, and of great beauty of locality. Nearly all the houses were painted white, and nestled in and out among the trees and hills. Many of their windows faced the river, and flashed back the golden fire of the setting sun. While Hagar watched the distant, but fast approaching village, Raymond called her attention to a mansion-house on the same side of the river, and which being some quarter of a mile below the village, was now quite opposite to them. Hagar turned and gazed with all a rustic's admiration, at the splendid mansion. Let me describe it as she then saw it. It stood half way up a forest-covered hill, which formed a back-ground to the oblong square front of white freestone, with its eight upper windows and four lower windows separated by the handsome marble portico, and blazing in the sunbeams, presented to the view.

"That is an elegant villa!" exclaimed Hagar.

"And it is beautiful on a nearer view," replied her husband.

"I wonder whose it is?"

"It is called 'The Rialto,' and belongs to a gentleman who is now travelling."

"Then it is unoccupied."

"It has been shut up a long time, and left in

Digitized by Google

the care of a porter who lives at the gate, *but* at the time I was last in this neighborhood, which, Hagar, was when I was returning, recalled by you, the house was undergoing repairs, cleaning, painting, &c., preparing for the reception of the owner, who was about to be married and bring home his young bride. I suppose by this time the coverings are all removed from the furniture, pictures, &c., that everything is in perfect readiness for the reception of the master."

While he spoke the sun sank below the horizon, and the blaze faded from the long windows of the villa just as the boat shot past. In ten more minutes she had reached the village of W———.

Mr. Withers conducted his wife to the nearest hotel, and leaving her there, returned to attend to his baggage.

Hagar sought a bed-chamber with a view of arranging her dress and smoothing her hair, that had been ruffled by the river breeze.

What were Hagar's feelings now that she was launched alone with her husband, out into a strange new scene? With one who was to be her constant companion for perhaps fifty or sixty years—for Hagar was but eighteen, and Raymond twenty-eight. High spirited, but forgiving, her fiery anger had expended itself long since, and her pride was quiet, as nothing new occurred to alarm it. But another feeling was alarmed and aroused,—her latent and deep-seated jealousy—in a silent but deadly fear of losing value in his estimation by comparison with the beautiful and gentle Rosalia, she had lost something of her proud self-confidence. Besides, severed from the home and friends of her childhood, from all early habits and associations; in a new and untried scene, a stranger and alone with him, she felt her dependence upon him—all this, and the deep, strong, and exclusive love she bore him, conspired with *another* circumstance to soften the fierceness of her spirit, and tame the wildness of her manners. Hagar arranged her travelling dress, and smoothed her glossy ringlets, and sat down by the window to watch the coming of Raymond. Could you have seen her then you would have loved her for the new and strange tenderness shining softly in her eyes, and blushing faintly through her cheeks and lips as she leaned her face upon her hand, while her elbow rested on the window-sill. At last the quick light step of Raymond was heard upon the stairs, and he entered, saying—

"Come, love! are you ready?"

She arose and tied her bonnet.

"Yes, and impatient to see our little home, dear Raymond—for a sweet *little* home I suppose it will be, to accord with your salary."

He smiled and drew her arm in his, led her down stairs, and through the principal entrance to where a carriage stood before the door. A coachman sat upon the box; a footman in livery stood holding the door open; Raymond handed her in, followed her, and took a seat by her side. The footman put up the steps, closed the door, and sprang up behind. The carriage was driven off. It rolled through the village, and leaving its lights behind, entered a broad but dark forest road.

"Where are we going?" inquired Hagar.

"*Home*, my love!"

"I thought that we were to reside in the village?"

"Did you?"

"Why, yes, certainly I did."

He drew her head down upon his bosom, and smoothing back her hair, kissed her forehead and then her lips; he seemed more inclined to caress than to converse, so she asked him no more questions then. He seemed to love her so tenderly and truly now, that she no longer defied him. And she was sinking into a sort of luxurious repose—which, we hope, may last. The carriage had been winding up a wooded hill, where the branches of the tall trees met overhead, so that Hagar, looking out, could scarcely see the stars glimmer through the foliage; at last it emerged from the woods and stopped; the steps were let down, the door opened. Raymond sprang out and held his hand to assist Hagar; then conducted her through a wide gate. It was dark, and she could see only trees, with glimpses of sward between them; and off to her left flitting in and out glimpses of a white house, whose size and shape it was impossible to detect. Their path formed a half circle and ascended; presently emerging from it, they stood before a large and elegant mansion, whose appearance corresponded with that of the villa she had so much admired on her way up the river. He led her up the broad marble stairs that led to the front door—opened the door, from which a flood of light poured, letting go her hand, stepped in before her, turned, opened his arms, and said, in a voice of deep emotion,

"Come, dear Hagar! Let me welcome you to your long, future home—welcome! welcome! dear wife, to arms, and bosom, and home."

Hagar threw herself into his embrace, and then he led her through a door opening from the left into a superb drawing-room, furnished in the old, gorgeous style, with a rich Turkey carpet "that stole all noises from the feet," with crimson velvet, gold fringed curtains hanging from the windows, and opposite from the lofty arch that divided the front from the back room; with heavy chairs and sofas, whose crimson coverings harmonized with the curtains; with crystal mirrors reaching from ceiling to floor; with rare paintings from the old masters; with costly and curious lamps, whose light glowing through the stained glass shades upon the crimson appointments of the room, diffused a rich, subdued refulgence through the scene. Raymond led Hagar to one of the deep arm-chairs, and seating her, pulled the bell-rope. The door opened, and the footman who had attended them, stood a step within the room.

"Request Mrs. Collins to come to us."

The man bowed and withdrew. Soon the door again opened, and a small, elderly woman, in a black silk dress and a neat cap, made her appearance.

"My dear Hagar, this is our housekeeper—the excellent Mrs. Collins—she will show you your dressing-room; you will find your trunks all there, or near at hand, and will have ample time to change your travelling-dress before supper, and we have still a long evening before us. To-morrow I will take you over the house," said he, in a low voice, as Mrs. Collins approached them—then, "Be so good as to show Mrs.

Digitized by Google

Withers to her rooms, Mrs. Collins," he said aloud, and the nice little woman smiled, withdrew, reappeared with a lamp, and conducted our Hagar, silently wondering, through the passage and up the broad staircase to a front room immediately over the drawing-room. It was a large, light, airy room, with two tall front windows curtained with white dimity, between which stood a dressing-table with a tall, swinging mirror. At the opposite end of the room was a mahogany door leading into her bed-chamber, and on each side of the door stood two large, tall mahogany wardrobes; the coverings of the lounge, easy chair, &c., were white, and the walls were covered with paper of a white ground, over which ran a vine of green leaves, with here and there a small, scarlet flower. The carpet on the floor was of the same cheerful pattern; the room had an inexpressibly clean, pure, and fragrant character. Placing her keys in the hands of Mrs. Collins, Hagar requested her to unpack and arrange her wardrobe, and then proceeded to make her toilet. And Hagar resolving to look her best, to do honor to the first evening passed with her husband in their own home, arranged her beautiful ringlets in their most becoming fall, arrayed herself in rich amber-colored satin, and clasped topaz bracelets on her arms—rubies and topazes were the only jewels Hagar owned—the only ones in fact that her Egypt complexion would bear. Her present dress and ornaments harmonized beautifully with her dark complexion, while her jetty brows, black eyes and eye-lashes, and long, black, glittering ringlets, relieved the amber-hued complexion and dress from sameness. She descended to the drawing-room, at the door of which Raymond received her, led her smiling to the sofa, and took a seat beside her, just as the crimson curtains were drawn each side from the centre of the arch, exposing a small, but elegant supper-table, with covers for two. Raymond arose, and offering his arm again with a smile, said—

"You see I have to do all the honors of reception and introduction, dear Hagar;" and passing to the other room, placed her at the head of the table, before a glittering tea-service of elegantly-chased silver, and of Sevres porcelain. "I see that you are wondering, Hagar, to find me in possession of a comfortable home; suspend your curiosity, dearest, until after supper, when I will make the very simple explanation."

And after supper, when they were seated together in the drawing-room, he said—

"I am not wealthy, which is the second mistake which you have made about me; neither am I poor, as you supposed when you married me, dear girl. This house, just as it is, was the country-seat of my grandfather, General Raymond, who, holding a high office under the Government, was in the receipt of an ample income that enabled him to keep up this style of living. This income of course died with him. This house, with its grounds of about twenty-five acres, and a small amount of bank stock, was left to me. That money was withdrawn and profitably invested, and its proceeds bring me an annual amount equal to the salary I receive for conducting the Newton School. It is true that it will take every cent of my salary to support this style. And if you ask me, Hagar, why I, a young professor, choose to live in a princely house, with a complete establishment of servants, I tell you that it is not from ostentation—you know me to be too really proud for that—but from a constitutional love and necessity of luxury. I told you before that my senses were keen and delicate—I had almost said intellectual—not strong, or gross. Forms and colors must be agreeably contrasted, or harmoniously blended and grouped for my eye; sounds must be music, or those that are not must come subdued through the hushings of soft carpets and velvet curtains; all scents, but the scent of fresh and growing flowers, must be kept far from the rooms I occupy; my table must be supplied with food delicate and nutritious; and lastly, nothing but soft or elastic substances must come in contact with my touch—at least in my home."

"But how, with your delicate tastes, can you bear your school-room?" asked Hagar.

"My school-room, lecture rooms, hall, &c., among which I pass just five hours a day, are each large, airy, clean, and *bare;* that is, bare of every article of furniture not strictly necessary; so that if there is nothing to *delight*, there is nothing to *offend*—for the rest, you know that teaching is my vocation, my passion. I give myself fully up to it during the hours of instruction, and when they are over, I return with revived relish for the luxuries of home—enjoyments that would pall upon the taste if they were not relieved by their absence during the hours of intellectual labor, which goes on in another place, and which is itself another keen enjoyment of a different and higher order; as it is, each relieves and enhances the other."

"But why," asked Hagar, "keep so many and such expensive servants, to wait on two young people who are not rich?"

"For many reasons, Hagar; for one thing it requires all of them, each in his or her appropriate place, to keep the house in the perfect order we wish, and in the second, I like to receive the services and veneration—not of Colonel A, B, and C, or Judge D, E, or F, but of people who live with me—by the way, remember that, love."

"But then," persisted Hagar, "why keep Mrs. Collins, whose salary must be large?"

"To oversee the others, and keep everything upon velvet, of course."

"I could do that, dear Raymond."

"But you shall not, dear Hagar. You are the lady of the mansion; but forget the house. I could not bear to see your brow corrugated by the thousand and one cares of housekeeping, or to have you come near me with the odor of pantries or stove-rooms hanging about you, for I should be sure to detect it through any disguise of perfume; and that is the great reason why I keep Mrs. Collins. You have nothing to do with the house, love. Cultivate your beauty, Hagar; refine it; you have nothing else to do, except to take lessons on the harp, which lessons and practice will help to fill up the hours of my *absence*, Hagar; for indeed, love, I think it would give me a brain fever to hear your unpractised fingers strumming discord in my ears"

"Will you permit me to inquire," asked Hagar, "why, with your sensitive, delicate, and luxurious tastes, you could fancy"—

"Such a wild, dark little savage as yourself?"

"Yes."

He raised her from the sofa, and turning

Digitized by Google

around, faced the full length mirror that occupied the space between the two windows behind it.

"Look at your reflection, Hagar," her eyes and *color* raised at the same moment. "You are a little dark, sparkling creature, your effect is exhilarating. A languishing beauty in these languishing rooms would have been softness to flatness. Are not the perfumes more piquant when conveyed through the medium of spirits of wine? You are just *l'esprit* that gives life to all this soft luxury; and look again, Hagar—survey yourself—see, this amber dress and amber complexion suit well together; and this is harmony. Suppose your hair was of the same hue, then the *tout ensemble* would be dull, flat, wearisome. But your ringlets fall black and glittering upon the amber-hued neck and bosom, and this is contrast. Thus contrast and harmony form the perfection of your toilet."

"I am sure I never thought of that," said Hagar, "when wishing to do honor to your fine house I put on a fine dress: but now I suppose—though I do not care to have my mind skewered down to such trifles—I must think a little more of it, as I suspect that in this grand house you receive grand company sometimes."

"*Never*, Hagar; how do you suppose I could afford it? for if I received grand company I should be invited to grand dinners, and have to give them in return, and that would disturb the luxurious repose of our house and life—no, Hagar, I am too self-indulgent to be ostentatious, or even hospitable. I like everything upon velvet, all downy, reposing, silent, or breathing low music"—

"Except me."

"Not *always* excepting you—I like your spirit tempered a little—thus—look again into the mirror, Hagar; I said your glittering blue-black ringlets, smoothed and gemmed as they are, form an agreeable contrast to the harmony of your dress; but now suppose that black hair hung in the wild elf locks of the little savage of the heath, as I first knew her—would that be agreeable any way?—no—well! govern—as it were, smoothe and gem your piquancy; in a word, use your wildness as you do your hair," and they turned and reseated themselves.

The next morning, after breakfast, Raymond took her all over the house; there were two floors besides the basement and attic—on each floor four large rooms handsomely furnished. Through the middle of each floor ran a hall, from front to back, dividing the rooms in pairs; on the lower floor on the left hand side of the hall were the drawing-room and dining-room we have seen them use on the first evening of their arrival; on the right hand side was a large saloon, once used for balls, but now closed as useless. He took her through the grounds, all handsomely laid out; a vineyard on the right, a kitchen garden in the middle, and an orchard on the left, occupying the ground behind the house, and further behind ascended the wooded hills. A smooth lawn descending the hill towards the river, was dotted here and there with trees, which were now dropping their leaves. The orchard was laden with the finest fruit—apples, peaches, pears, &c., under the highest cultivation; the vineyard rich in clustering grapes, brought to the nearest possible state of perfection. This was Wednesday; on the following Monday Raymond resumed his professional labors, and Hagar wandered up and down the fine house, with every part of which she was now quite familiar, very weary and lonesome. She felt confined, restrained, and oppressed by her new state. True, she was still in the country, but not on her wild heath, with her horse and dogs. *This* country was thickly settled, well cultivated, and closely studded with gentlemen's seats.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LOVE ANGEL.

"She is soft as the dew-drops that fall
From the lips of the sweet scented pea;
But then when she smiles upon *all!*
Can I joy that she smiles upon *me?*"
MACKENZIE.

Our dear Sophie, with her quiet adaptiveness, had easily and gracefully passed from rustic life into city life, into naval life, without losing any of her individuality. Her country every-day dress of brown stuff was now changed for a brown satin, her seal-skin shoes for patent morocco slippers, and her muslin collar for one of fine lace. Her smooth brown hair, instead of being knotted into a neat twist behind her head, was arranged in a beautiful braid.

The inevitable knitting-needles *had* to be plied, in sad old hall or in gay new state-room; they were a part of Sophie, and she could as well have dispensed with her fingers; they were necessary to keep time with the music of Sophie's serene temperament—only now they knit silken nets and purses instead of woollen socks. This was all the change you could perceive in Sophie, looking at her half across the cabin; but if you went and sat down beside her, you would then see that her eye was bright, her cheek lively, and her lip fresh, with an inward and emanating joy. She sat quiet enough in her cabin, with Rosalia seated on a cushion by her side. Rosalia loved cushions and low seats, where she could sit and loll upon Sophie lazily and lovingly, like a petted baby-girl, as she was. And Sophie loved to have her there with her golden hair floating over her lap. Sometimes, tired of repose, Rosalia would bring out her portfolio or sketch book, embroidery frame or guitar, or pursue some of the thousand occupations by which girls contrive to destroy time. These were during the morning hours before it was time to dress for dinner, where Captain Wilde received daily, several of the officers. They (Sophie and Rosalia) were quiet enough, yet Captain Wilde seemed to be haunted with a fear that some hour he should wake from a dream, and find his happiness vanished into thin air, by the number of times while on deck, that he would come to the gangway, and looking down upon his treasures, exclaim gladly, "Oh! you are there!"

Most frequently Gusty May made a third in the cabin, his impetuous mirth rattling along like thunder, and then suddenly smothered with a sigh like a big sough of wind in the sails, and sometimes darkened by great clouds between his

Digitized by Google

eyes and nose that threatened rain; nay, sometimes as he looked at Rosalia's serene joy the rain-drops would gather in his eyes—though I have an idea that Gusty would have challenged any man who would have told him so.

Sometimes when the weather was inviting, Sophie and Rosalia, attended by Captain Wilde or Gusty May, or both, would visit the city.

Time glided swiftly away. Two weeks of Gusty's visit were over, but three weeks remained before he would have to go to sea, and the clouds daily gathered thicker over the Gusty sky, when one day the young midshipman who had been appointed to take the post poor Gusty coveted so much, came on board for the first time. It was not in Gusty's large, generous, and trusting soul, to be easily jealous, neither was it in his human nature to look indifferently upon the young officer, who, during his own absence, was to fill a post near the person of his beloved, so ardently desired by himself. The staff of officers on board the ship was small, consisting of Captain Wilde, Lieutenant Graves, a married man, solemn and repulsive as his name, a little freckle-faced midshipman, and now this new officer, this young passed-midshipman, this *Misther* Murphy, as Gusty maliciously emphasized his title, what was he going to look like? Gusty wished in his heart that he might be knock-kneed and cross-eyed. Alas for Gusty! Mr. Murphy, Mr. Patrick Murphy O'Murphy, a Southerner of Irish descent—stood six feet six inches in his boots! had the handsomest leg, the broadest shoulders, the fullest chest, the blackest whiskers, and the whitest teeth, in the service. Alas for Gusty! it was too much! he filled right up! he could have sobbed, gushed out, liquidated, deliquesced, fallen upon and overflowed the shoulders of the first friend that came in his way, but for his self-esteem that striking up through all this softness, stiffened and sustained him! Poor Gusty! he was in the briers until he could hear what Rosalia thought of "Mister Murphy," yet he had an invincible repugnance to name him to her, and to ask her in so many words, what she thought of "Mr. Murphy"—*no! thumb-screws* would not have wrung such a question from him! nevertheless he must arrive at her opinion of "Mr. Murphy," or die. Mr. Murphy had been presented to the ladies about half an hour before dinner, and had dined with the Captain. After the ladies had retired from the table and while the gentlemen still lingered over their wine, Gusty slipped away and followed them into the cabin. Sophie was away somewhere. Rosalia was alone. He went up to her, sat down, and drew her on a seat by his side. After all sorts of a desultory, wil', and nonsensical conversation, he suddenly said to her:

"Rosalia, do you like handsome men?"

"Yes," said Rosalia, calmly, "I like handsome folks."

"Pshaw! that is just like you. Who is the handsomest man now you ever saw in your life, Rosalia?"

"Oh! *Captain Murphy, certainly*—far the handsomest person I ever saw in all my life!"

"The d—l! I said so—Irish bog-trotter."

"Oh, don't use profane language, dear Gusty, please."

"*Captain*, indeed, you simple girl—*he's* no captain!"

"Aint he? I thought he was; indeed he *looks* like one."

"Oh, he looks like a prince, a king, an emperor, a demi-god, don't he? Aint he like Apollo Belvidere, now?"

"Yes, I think he is," said Rose, quietly, "just my idea of the Apollo."

"Set fire to him!" blazed Gusty.

"Oh! don't swear—please don't"—pleaded Rose. "Why do you not like him, dear Gusty? *I* do, I like him, and I am sure you ought to like him *because I do*—and you ought to be kind to him because, poor fellow! look at his melancholy blue eyes—"

"Oh! his melancholy blue devils!"

"Oh! Gusty, hush!" said she, softly, putting her hand on his lips.

"But this is too trying! I be *whipped* if it ain't! I do believe the devil has taken my affairs under his own particular care! but I won't put up with it! I be *whipped* if I do! . I'll call this fellow out!"

"Call him where?"

"Call him *out!* fight him! thrash him! jump through him—crush him—grind him—down into an ink spot, and then erase him!"

"What has he done to you, Gusty, that you hate him so, and he so beautiful, too?"

"Done to me!" snapped Gusty. "Oh, Rose, shut up! you are such a fool!"

This was too much for Rosalia—she had been growing softer every instant, and now melted into tears. Then Gusty's indignation turned upon himself, called himself a barbarian, a brute, a monster, and begged Rosy to knock him down. Rose dried her morning dew tears and smiled again just as Sophie entered. A week passed away, and now but two weeks remained of the visit. A week, during which Gusty had contrived to circulate around his sun so rapidly and constantly as to prevent the comet Murphy from crossing his orbit. Still he was very unhappy in the idea of leaving his treasure unguarded—had serious thoughts of throwing up his commission—when one day on deck the young passed-midshipman, whom, by the way, he had treated very coldly at all times, placed himself by his side, and drawing his arm within his own, began to promenade the deck, saying,

"Come, my fine fellow! I know all about it, and may be can do something for you. Wilde told me all about it—your love—and hopes, and disappointments, and everything. Now, I am going to perpetrate a real Irish blunder—going—what do you think—*to sea in your place*, and to let you stay here with this sweet girl—easy—easy, man! steady! so! hear me out. My father is a senator from the state of ———, is a particular friend of the Secretary of War. I have written to him to get our appointments reversed. Hush! hush! no gratitude, my *dear* fellow, it is all selfishness—*Irish* selfishness!" and his blue eyes and white teeth shone radiantly in the kind smile he turned upon Gusty, and Gusty, oh! his emotion, his joy, gratitude, and remorse, is *unreportable!*—no, not to be set down against him! At last, to moderate the raptures of his gratitude, blue eyes and white teeth assured him that *he* wished (blue eyes, &c.,) particularly to visit the port of ——, whither the ship to which Gusty had been appointed, was bound, and that therefore he *had* a selfish reason

Digitized by Google

for his seeming generosity. Later in the week, Gusty became the repository of a love-confidence from Midshipman Murphy. At the end of the week the appointments were reversed. Mr. Murphy was ordered to the Mediterranean, and Mr. May appointed passed-midshipman of the good ship Rainbow.

These orders were received early one morning. In the afternoon Gusty and the young Irishman were on deck together. They were great friends, you may rest assured. The following conversation occurred. Rosalia had just left them. She had been conversing with Gusty with all her usual calm and guileless affection.

"It does me good to think that you will remain here with that sweet girl, May."

"You're a good fellow, Murphy. God bless you."

"And you're a *happy* fellow, May. God *has* blessed you."

"Happy! yes, by Jove! I only wish you knew how devilish 'happy' I am," said Gusty, with a bitter sneer.

"Why, what is the matter? jealous again, another rival?"

"Oh, no! it is not that."

"What is it then?"

Gusty had one great failing, an inability to keep his troubles to himself, a propensity to melt like a snow-drift in the sun at the first sympathy that shone on him.

"She is very fond of you," said Mr. Murphy.

"Yes! that is just exactly what troubles me."

"Come! you are very reasonable!"

"Oh! for the Lord's sake don't make fun of me! *don't!* It is no jesting matter!"

"Poor fellow! how he is to be pitied because a sweet girl annoys him with her love."

"See here! now don't! I can't stand it. Love me? *Yes, she does.* She loves her old, poor blind nurse Cumbo—uncle's Newfoundland dog, Juno, and *me* about in the same proportion, and in the same manner."

"Whew-ew-w!"

"*Fact* I am telling you—listen now again. I have watched her—*have I not?* She will caress *me* right before her aunt's face, freely and calmly as though I were her grandmother—then dropping her arms from around my neck, she will call Juno and caress *her* with equal affection! and then my uncle, she always runs to meet him and throws herself in his arms when he comes! and yourself, you remember how she received you, with a gentle affectionate welcome, as though you were an accredited candidate for a share of her universal love."

"Are you betrothed?"

"Certainly, these many weeks, and when I talk of marriage she blushes and smiles, it is true, but not with love! only with a bashful repugnance to make herself a prominent object of attention as a bride. Yet she tells me she loves me! Oh, yes, she loves me! and the next minute she will throw her arms around Juno's neck and tell her she loves *her!* and with *equal fervor.* And if ever I complain to her that she does not love me, she weeps as though I did her an injury. Nearly three months have I spent in trying to kindle one spark, to touch one chord of responsive passion in her bosom. I have poured my whole soul forth at her feet, and she looks at me with her calm, sweet eyes, and wonders at me, I know she does, for a sort of Orlando Furioso, and drives me nearly distracted by insisting that she *does* love me, when I feel that she does *not*, or even know what she is talking about. I would give my commission to see her blush, tremble, shrink when I caress her—the devil of it is that she loves me like a baby loves her grandmother, nor does she dream of, nor can I awaken her to any other love! Her affections, her caresses are freely bestowed upon man, woman, child, or beast alike. I have never seen her shrink with averted eyes from the eye or conversation of but *one* man, and *that* was not in the first part of their acquaintance, it was only just before they parted, and now that I recall it, great God! it comes up before me in a new light," said Gusty, in his impetuosity forgetting to whom he was talking—"they were standing where we now stand. I was near them. He was speaking to her of unimportant matters, the names of the ships, &c., he was looking at her. I being on the other side of him could not see his eyes, but suddenly she raised *her* eyes. I felt that she met *his*—her color came and went, her bosom rose and fell, then turning around she held her hand out to me, with her face averted. I drew it through my arm and carried her off for a promenade. That hour I quietly ascribed her disturbance to bashfulness or fear, but *now* that I recall it in connexion with the subject of our conversation, a new, a dreadful light seems to break over it, but no! Oh, God! *that* would be too dreadful!"

"But what man was this, then?"

Gusty had suddenly grown quite white, and now the color rushed into his face, crimsoning his brow, and swelling the veins like cords.

"What man was it, then, that possessed the power of agitating this calm beauty?"

"Don't ask me!" broke forth Gusty, "I am mad! Oh, it is just madness now for me to dream such horrors! stay, let me hold my head! Murphy, don't mind *me*,—I am crazy! the girl's coldness has just set me beside myself!"

They were silent some time, and then Gusty, suddenly seizing Murphy's arm, exclaimed,

"Murphy, forget all my raving, will you? I am a fool! I shall be jealous next of her embroidery frame!"

It was not so easy to forget his agitation during the half-confiding of the slight suspicion. The friends soon after separated.

Gusty went into the cabin. He found Rosalia happy over a pair of doves, a parting present left for her by Mr. Murphy.

"Oh, Gusty," she said, "come look at my beautiful young doves—this white one is a boy, and his name is Snowflake, and this silver-grey one is a girl, and her name is Dewdrop!"

"Umph! two new claimants for a few of the infinitesimal atoms of your divided heart," said Gusty, sitting down beside her. He was indisposed for conversation,—he was feeling too bitterly that the profound heart of the beautiful and gentle girl was still unmoved.

Girls who virtually pledge their affections where they cannot love, do not so often commit this grievous error from the authority and commands of parents or guardians, from the persuasion of friends, from ambition, or for conve

Digitized by Google

nience, as from a different, a more amiable, yet still more improper set of motives, inspired by benevolence and love of approbation—thus: A young girl, with the deeps of her heart yet undisturbed, becomes the object of an ardent admiration—her vanity is stimulated and gratified—she may even mistake this pleasure for affection, and from pure ignorance of her own and her lover's nature, and of the misery she may bring upon herself and others, she continues to receive and encourage his attentions. His admiration deepens into love, then her pity is moved, and though she cannot return the affection, she cannot resist the suit, and the hand is bestowed without the heart. As far as my limited experience extends, I have reason to believe that benevolence, love of approbation, together with a want of firmness, mislead more girls into the formation of ill-considered engagements than any other set of causes whatsoever.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AGNES AND AGATHA.

"Oh, Heaven of bliss, when the heart overflows
With the rapture a *mother* only knows."
HENRY WARE.

SOMETHING less than a year had passed since the settlement of Mr. and Mrs. Withers in their new home. It was now early autumn. Let me introduce you into that large, beautiful, and fragrant dressing-room into which Mrs. Collins had conducted our Hagar upon the first night of her arrival. The room wears the same pure and elegant appearance that it presented nearly a year since—nothing is changed, except by the addition of one article of furniture—near the right hand front corner of the room stands a large rose-wood crib, with beautifully embroidered thin white muslin curtains drawn around it. Let us draw back the curtains and look within—upon a downy pillow, covered with the finest, smoothest lawn, repose two babes of a few weeks old; we can only see their beautiful heads and faces, for their tiny forms are lightly covered by the white silk eider down quilt. But look at their sleeping faces, and tell me who they resemble—their fine blue-black hair looks like floss silk—we may be sure that their eyes are black by the slender eye-brows traced like a black pencil curve, and by the long black lashes that repose upon the crimson cheeks; look at the noble foreheads, at the elegant features; look at the delicate crimson lips, with the spirited curve of the upper one. They are our Hagar's children! would you not have recognised and claimed them if you had found them in the wilderness? They are our Hagar's twins—duplicate miniatures of herself—and now her bedroom door opens and she comes in, pacing slowly in an India muslin wrapper, with her ringlets glittering down as we used to see them; she comes and pauses softly, bending over the infant sleepers. Now, whether it is the reflection of the white muslin curtains, together with her white dressing robe, or whether her many months sedentary in-door life, and her recent illness had bleached her into a blonde, is not known; but certainly she is many shades fairer, and much thinner than when we saw her last; her carnation cheek has faded to a pale rose tint, her eyes are not so wild and bright, they are larger, sadder; instead of a lightning glance, they have now an earnest gaze; and see while she stoops over them till the ends of her bright ringlets rest upon the counterpane, her bosom heaves, her cheek flushes, her lips glow and open, her eyes grow bright and brighter, and her soul, pouring from her countenance, bathes the sleepers in a libation of love and blessing. How earnest her eyes are! how devotional her whole air, as her lips move in silent heart-worship! Now the passage door opened, and Raymond enters, going up to his wife's side; he stood contemplating the children in silence, until she took his hand, and drawing his arm around her waist, turned and buried her face passionately in his bosom, while her ringlets fell over his circling arms. Then raising her head, she pointed to the sleeping infants, and exclaimed with enthusiasm,

"Are they not beautiful, dearest?"

"Yes, love, yes—but you have asked me that question every few days for the last month, and I have always answered you in the same words; when they grow ugly, love, I will tell you."

Hagar's eyes were again turned on her children—her soul was again bathing them with love.

"Shall I not have to grow jealous of these little girls, who take up so much of your time and thoughts, love?"

"Jealous of these children? of these children who make me love you?" exclaimed Hagar, embracing him fervently. "Oh! my husband! so much more than ever I loved you before! they have deepened and widened my love. Ah, my own! my own Raymond—*try* my love now, and see how much stronger its texture is—it will bear a great deal of pulling now, Raymond—ask me to give up anything *now*, Raymond, and see if I make a fuss about my pride and dignity—my pride! as if I could set up a separate establishment of pride—and my dignity, as if I could not trust it in your keeping, Raymond, dear Raymond!—as if I *could* have a separate interest or a separate will—but you loved the unblessed maiden—will you not love more, a great deal more, the blessed mother—say, Raymond! say!" Her ardent soul, inspired by her passionate affections, was kindling into exalted enthusiasm, and glowing through all the features of her beautiful face; breaking through and bearing down all screens of reserve or pride. "Say, Raymond! say! oh, I love you so much now—I crave such a fulness of return—say, Raymond! say, how much more than the unblessed maiden do you love the doubly blessed mother?"

"My Hagar!" said he, softly, "try to be calm, love; moderate your enthusiasm, get used to your joy; these children have been with you long enough for that."

"Ah! but every time I look at them again a new joy breaks up from the bottom of my heart—just as though they were newly given me. And then to think that there are *two*—so perfectly beautiful—*two!* God not satisfied to give us *one*, gives us two. Oh, blessed be God! When I forget to thank, to worship Him, may these dear ones forget me. Two!" said she, panting, and taking breath, while her color came and

Digitized by Google

went—"two love-angels!—and so perfectly beautiful—and so perfectly alike—and so loving! look, Raymond!" and she turned down the counterpane, "see, lay them as I will, in a few minutes they are sure to attract each other, to subside together, as it were, until shoulder touches shoulder and cheek meets cheek." And then she placed their little hands together softly, without waking them, her lips parted and glowed over them an instant, she kissed them lightly and covered them again. "And oh, what a charge! God has given me two pure angels to guard from contamination! I must pray more; I must pray a great deal; I must get the Lord to take me into his confidence about these children, these cherubs. Oh, thank, dearest, thank the Lord for the gift of these two spotless angels, and pray, pray that we may be enabled to present them before his throne, pure as we received them from his hands." Her face was inspired, was radiant with love, awe, and worship, as she continued, "I receive these babes as the deposit of a special trust from God; he has given me two of his own most beautiful children, shall I not try to be worthy of his confidence? Yes! yes! my two angels," said she, bending over them again. "How beautiful are the works of his hands! Raymond, do but look how perfectly beautiful they are! These little black, silky heads; these fine brows and delicate features."

"They are very much like *you*, love."

"They are very much like each other."

"They are duplicate copies. I cannot tell one from the other by the closest examination."

"Can you not, indeed, now—oh! it is easy—I never made a mistake about them; this is Agnes and this is Agatha, you know." And then she began to point out some infinitesimal marks of distinction, that none but a mother's eye could possibly have detected. "Now do you not see?"

"I do not, love; you will have to dress them differently."

"Oh! never!"

"Or tie some badge upon the eldest, that I may know them apart," smiled Raymond, shaking his head with all its golden waves.

"And you are so handsome, Raymond!" exclaimed she, clasping his form, and burying her face again in his bosom. "And, oh! are we not happy? are we not God-blessed—are we not so entirely united—can we have an interest or a wish apart now? Oh, dearest Raymond, through all the ages of eternity you and I—are we not one?"

"Dear love, be quiet, you talk so much," said he, softly and smilingly lifting her head from his bosom.

"Talk! oh! how can I help it, dearest Raymond, when my God-given life and love grows too strong for suppression? I have seen the emotions of other women escape in quiet tears of joy, but I am not given to tears, you know; there is too much fire in my composition—oh! how can I help talking, Raymond? I *must* speak or consume, Raymond! Does not the horse neigh for joy when he feels his strong life—and what volumes of music, filling earth and sky, the little bird throws from his tiny chest for joy; the flowers bloom for joy; the trees *wave* for joy; the streams *run* for joy; the cataract leaps over its rocky precipice with a *shout* of joy; nay, the *earth*—the earth *whirls* around the sun in a reel of joy; and shall I, shall I with all this God-given life, this love, this joy, this gladness, this glory, kindling, burning, and glowing, striking up from my bosom—shall I suppress it? turning back to cold silence and ingratitude? No, Father. No, angels. No, husband. No, children. You shall *hear* how happy I am in the worship of joy!—in the worship of joy!"

You might see the fire of her ardent soul, as the flame glowed upon her lips, wavered over her crimson cheek, and shot in radiant glances from her eyes, as she spoke; now gazing with rapt inspiration on her children; now turning, and fervently embracing her husband, with a *pure*, though passionate love!

"You would make a good camp-meeting subject, love," said he, smiling.

"Oh, Raymond, *now* I understand the enthusiasm of camp-meetings; the ecstasy of conversion. Say they sometimes fall, or seem to fall, from grace, from bliss; why that is human, that is natural; the spring sometimes backslides into winter for days, yet we do not upon that account deny the presence of spring, or the approach of summer; both seasons, summer to the year, sanctification to the soul—with all impediments, all relapses and collapses; all weaknesses and falls; all wanderings and retrogradings—still advance—on! and up! under the guidance of Divinity."

"You are strangely changed, Hagar—not in your individuality, but in your proportions—from the positive of wild to the superlative of wildest."

"I am not wilder. Oh, Raymond! my life is deeper, higher, broader, fuller—for these children, for these messengers from Heaven. Let my heart sing its song of joy. Oh, Raymond! when we are *un*happy, even when we ourselves have brought the unhappiness upon us, the calmest of us cry out in tones of grief, bitterness, and reproach, 'God! God!' and no one complains of its extravagance! Shall we not, when we are blessed and happy, sing in tones of grateful rapture, 'God! God!'"

"You must be quiet, love! be calm. I just looked in to bid you good morning before going out. Shall you be able to come down into the drawing-room this evening?"

"Yes," replied Hagar, softly, and half abstractedly.

The lamps were lighted in the drawing-room. Hagar was seated at her piano, practising a piece of new music. She was attired with taste and elegance in a crimson satin, that the coolness of the evening rendered appropriate at this season. Her hair was gemmed and braided so that the long ringlets held away from her cheeks and brow fell behind. In the first months of their marriage it had been Raymond's pleasure to have her elegantly attired to receive him in the evening, and of late, it had grown into a habit and a necessity to herself. She sat now awaiting him. Presently he entered softly, and she arose, sprung, and then, with a sudden thought, controlled her eagerness, and went quietly to meet him. When he had saluted her, and they were seated, she blushingly unrolled a piece of manuscript music, and said,

Digitized by Google

"See here, dear Raymond! I have got something here for you, something that you will like, something that you will glory in. I did not know until to-day that I could compose music; did not even suspect that I could; but to-day my soul has been so full of music, so bursting with music, that it has found expression! The hallelujahs of Christopher Smart, the very poet of worship, were resounding through my spirit ears; I wished to sing them, *had* to sing them. I came down here, and seating myself before the piano, struck the keys, and in a fit of inspiration, set them to music—here is the music. I could not do it again; and now the music is infinitely inferior to the words. Oh! the words are sublime—a splendid pageant—a magnificent march of grand and gorgeous imagery, that nothing but an intellect inspired by love, and exalted by worship to a power of conception and expression that men call insanity, could have produced. They called *him* mad! and shut him up in the narrow cell of a lunatic asylum, debarring him the use of books, pens, and ink; but even there the jubilant soul found expression. With a rusty nail upon the white-washed walls of his cell, he wrote his glorious 'Song of David,' worthy to be bound up with the psalms of David. It is from this song that I have taken out these words that I have set to music. Oh! how I wish some great master would set them. Hear my attempt, Raymond, and worship with me through the words."

She went and seated herself at the piano. He followed and stood leaning over her chair. She played an inspiring prelude, and then her voice broke forth in sudden rapture that filled with volume as it soared, until the very atmosphere seemed inspired with life, became sentient and vocal, and shuddered with the burden of the grand harmony it bore!

Glorious the sun in mid-career;
Glorious the assembled fires appear;
Glorious the comet's train:
Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
Glorious the Almighty's stretched-out arm;
Glorious the enraptured main:

Glorious the Northern lights astream;
Glorious the song when God's the theme;
Glorious the thunder's roar;
Glorious hosannas from the den;
Glorious the catholic amen;
Glorious the martyr's gore:

Glorious, more glorious is the crown
Of Him that brought salvation down,
By meekness called thy son;
Thou that stupendous truth believed,
And now the matchless deed's achieved,
DETERMINED, DARED, and DONE.

The music shuddering, fell into silence. She remained rapt in ecstasy long after the last notes subsided, and until Raymond, laying his hand softly on her head, said,

"Hagar! this will not do, love; you excite yourself too much—the action is too high—your system is getting to be all blood—fever—fire."

"Oh! is it not grand, this song? Does any psalm of David transcend it; does any hymn of Watts come up to it?"

"It is grand, sublime, stunning—and I do not like to be stunned, you know, love! Besides, I am afraid you are not very far from the state and fate of its author, wild Hagar! wild in your love, wild in your worship, and wild in your devotions, as once in your mad revels. Will you never grow tame? Never, I believe unless your heart be broken."

"And must the poor heart be knocked on the head, before it can behave itself to please people? That was the song of boding ever sung to me by Sophie and by Emily, when I grew too happy to contain myself. Now, why must my heart be broken? What harm has it done that it must be broken? The Lord will not break it, I feel sure; nay, if my fellow creatures in their error break it, my Father will bind it up again. But now, then, dear Raymond, what does it all mean?"

"It means, Hagar, that by a happy exemption from illness, grief, or temptation, in fact from all the common miseries of human nature, you have grown arrogant in your joy, and hence your jubilant spirit."

"*Have* I been so exempted! 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness;' but I will not recall past human wrongs, in the midst of present Divine blessings."

"Your past wrongs, like your present blessings, are greatly exaggerated by imagination, Hagar—but here is supper," said he, arising and giving her his arm, just as the crimson curtains were noiselessly withdrawn from the arch, displaying the glittering service awaiting them.

This was the last day of Hagar's Worship of Joy. The Baptism of Grief—the Worship of Sorrow—did she dream that such could be?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CLOUDS.

"Life treads on life, and heart on heart,
We press too close in church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart."
ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

THE next evening when Raymond returned home, he placed in the hands of his wife an open letter, addressed to herself in Sophie's handwriting. A year ago, Hagar would have fiercely resented this cool violation of her seal—now her soul was too large and joyous to cavil about her personal dignity, or even to think about it at all. Pressing and kissing the hand that brought her the letter, she sat down to read it. It was short. Our dear Sophie was no scribe. It ran thus:

"U. S. STORE SHIP RAINBOW,
"October 13th, 18—.

"DEAREST HAGAR,—We, Augustus and myself, wish you and Raymond much joy of your young daughters. We gladly accept your affectionate invitation to visit you, and shall be with you on the first of November. Not, however, as you kindly insist upon our doing, to remain with you for any length of time. The fact is, that Captain Wilde is ordered to the Mediterranean; and as I have no babies to prevent me, I am going out with him: it is his wish, and *mine*. We cannot take Rosalia with us, because being still 'afraid of the water,' she refuses to go. Gusty has been ordered to the same service, and will sail of course at the same time. He will accompany us on our visit to you, as also of course will Rosalia. If you can keep Rosalia, we wish to leave her with you—if not, we shall be compelled to take the dear girl to the South, and place her in charge of her future mother-in-law, Emily Buncombe. In either case, Captain Wilde wishes to be held responsible for her board and all other expenses—as we have

Digitized by Google

resolved to leave her small patrimony untouched, to accumulate at compound interest. Once more accept our heartfelt congratulations, and believe me always

"Your affectionate aunt,
"SOPHIE WILDE."

Hagar's hands, with her letter, dropped upon her lap, and she fell into thought.

"You will write by the return mail, and accept the charge of your cousin, Hagar?"

"Y-es," said she, "certainly"—but a shadow fell upon her brow.

He did not observe it, or appear to observe it, and continued, "And *when* you write, Hagar, give them gently to understand that their hint concerning the payment of board was a little impertinent, to say the *least*, even if it were not, as I hope and wish to believe it *was* not, a piece of intentional arrogance on the part of Captain Wilde."

"I can tell them it was unnecessary. But I am sure no arrogance was meant or felt—how could they be arrogant towards *us!* If they spoke to us of payment, they made the mistake in the simple, straightforward spirit of their hearts, unsuspicious of the chance of giving offence; but," said she, pondering, "I wonder when Rosalia and Gusty are to be married. Sophie has not given me the least idea of the time."

"Rosalia is yet too young, not quite seventeen, I believe; and Gusty not yet twenty—*both* are too young; three years from the time of their engagement, that is two years hence, was the period assigned for their marriage, was it not?"

"Yes," said Hagar, still in thought.

"That is, if the young lovers remained in the same mind?"

"Yes," said Hagar, and then, suddenly, she exclaimed, "You recollect these details better than I do; you have a good memory, Raymond."

"I always plead guilty to the charge, love."

Hagar fell deeper into thought, then sank into gloom. Was it the natural reaction of so much and such great excitement? Was it the rational sorrow at the thought of soon parting with Sophie, knowing her to be bound for a long and perilous sea voyage? Was it either or all these causes combined, that oppressed her heart and darkened her countenance?

Reader, it was none of these things. A dread of the winsome beauty's approach, a dread, not reasonable enough to justify her in opposing the measure—a dread for which she blamed herself, yet a dread that she could not shake off—a dread that fell dark on her brow, and struck cold to her bosom. A deep, up-piercing instinct; will it rise through the stages of doubt, suspicion, to jealousy in all its phrensy? The sin sown and nurtured by the wrongs of her neglected infancy, her besetting sin and sorrow—not dead, but long coiled in serpent-torpor in the bottom of her heart now revives, now rears its head.

"Come, love, write your letter now before tea, so that it may go out in this evening's mail," were the words that aroused her from her abstraction, and she arose and left the room to do his bidding.

Immediately on rising the next morning, Hagar had, as usual, thrown on her dressing-gown and gone to the side of the crib to gaze upon her sleeping beauties. She bent over them in her morning beauty, with her black hair escaping from the little lace *coiffe de nuit*, and dropping in shining rings around her—she bent over them breathing her morning blessing, when her husband, having completed his toilet, came in and sank into an easy chair on the opposite side. He sat there looking at her very intently some minutes; at length he said,

"Hagar, you are pale this morning."

"Am I?"

"Yes, and you lose flesh daily."

"Do I?"

"Do you not *perceive* that you do?"

"No, indeed, I never thought of it."

"No, you never thought of it, mind and body are alike absorbed, entirely absorbed by one object—the nursing of your children; flesh and beauty, health and life are leaving you unnoted, these children are killing you."

"These! these dear children, Raymond? Oh, do not bring such a charge against these sleeping innocents. They give me life and joy, the angels!"

"There, love! do not go off into raptures this morning, I do implore you. Yes, Hagar, they are killing you; you are very delicate, always were, and within the last few weeks you have lost flesh and color very rapidly; the nursing of these two children is too great a draught upon your strength, it will break down your health."

"But, dear Raymond, you are mistaken. I am well and strong! thank God! *indeed* I am. It is true that I am thin, I always *was*. I never was calm enough to get fat, but I do not think that want of flesh argues want of health *always*—in me I *know* it does not. I have sound, unbroken health. I never had an ache or a pain in all my life—oh! except once," she said, laughing and blushing—"nor even a feeling of languor. Fatigue after violent and long-continued exercise has only been a slight weariness soon agreeably lost in repose. God clothed my spirit in a good strong garment, and I have treated it well; though I have worn it every day, it is as fresh and new as a Maryland girl's best Sunday frock."

"They are killing you, nevertheless, Hagar, I say! Your features are growing sharp, your hands," and he took her delicate hand in his own, "your hands are nearly transparent, amber-like, and indeed the knuckles are growing prominent—come! Hagar, dear, you are growing ugly as well as ill, and, Hagar, it will not do. There is a feverishness in your manner also that is not healthful. Your devotion to these children is destroying you, and it must be moderated."

She looked at him with an expression of anxiety striking up through her brilliant eyes piercingly. He continued,

"And, Hagar, it must be arrested."

"How? why? in what manner? in what degree? What *do* you mean?"

"I mean, love, that you must procure a substitute."

"A—*substitute*," repeated she.

"Yes, love, that is to say you must put the children out to nurse."

"Put them—put my two babies out to nurse

Digitized by Google

—away from me!" faltered the young mother, growing very pale.

"Yes, love, it is not an unusual thing among ladies in this section of the country—ladies especially of delicate organization as yourself; and in this case of *two* children, Hagar, it is too much for you, and must not be thought of. Do not look so distressed, dear, it will be better for *you*, and better for them. Mrs. Collins will find some healthy and reliable woman who will be willing to take charge of them at a reasonable compensation, and who can be required to bring them often to see you. She must attend to it to-day. Come, Hagar, do not look so dejected; in a day or two you will grow accustomed to it, and be contented with knowing that they are well."

And he arose and was sauntering away. Now all the blood rushed back to her face, and starting up she caught his hand and drew him back to the side of the crib. Her bosom was heaving and setting, the color flashing in and out upon her cheek, but she controlled herself by a great effort, as, pointing to the children, she said,

"You do not love babies, Raymond; no, not even your *own*, not even these beautiful cherubs; alas! I have not *that* to learn now! but, Raymond, *I* love them as the tigress loves her young, and as the soul loves her angels, and soul from body could be severed with less of pain and less of regret than these children from my bosom. Raymond, I know your indomitable strength of will; alas! I have not *that* to learn either! I know your persevering inflexibility of purpose, and the power of carrying your purpose into effect. I know that when you make a proposition, or express a wish, you virtually *give a command!* and one you mean to have obeyed. I know all this, and I know, Raymond, your power of torturing me, do I not? I know that this hour is opened a controversy between us in which *you* will never yield, never to my *opposition*, never to my prayers; never, unless I can awaken your parental love. Oh! Raymond, where in your soul slumbers this parental love—*sleeps* your parental love in such a death-like sleep that the innocence and beauty of these children cannot awaken it—look at your children, Raymond, and withdraw your proposition, your command rather!" pleaded Hagar, with clasped hands and straining eyes. "Do not separate this beautiful little family, this perfect little family that we four form."

He composedly resumed his seat, looking quietly at her while she spoke; when she had ceased, he said,

"Hagar, I make you a proposition, give you what I think a sufficient reason, and you answer me with a torrent of sentimental rhapsody; now have you said all that you have to say in opposition to my wishes? Come, I await your reply."

"'Said all I have to say!' Oh, I could talk a month, a year, until time exhausted the subject, if it would convince you."

"But it will not, as you rightly guess, my love, for now what does it all amount to, after all that you may have to say, is said? The question simply resolves itself into this: whether you will comply with my wishes, or defy the consequences of a non-compliance."

She dropped her head upon the side of the crib, and remained silent for some moments, and then, without raising it, she said,

"Raymond, please tell me *why*, give me some reason for your wish to have the children sent away?"

"Your health and beauty are decaying."

"But they are not!—they are not! You are *utterly* mistaken. God knows that you are!"

"You are feverish and excitable."

"Not feverish—it is the overflowing exuberance of health and joy!"

"Come, love! contradict me in everything I say, of course. There is one thing, however, too harassingly plain to be covered; it is *this*—your suite of private apartments is converted into a nursery, of which you have constituted yourself chief nurse. I have borne with this for five or six weeks, Hagar, and now it is growing insufferable, and I must have a change, *will* have a change, love! So reconcile yourself to the temporary loss of these children as well as you can. They are to be sent away for *their own* sakes as well as for yours. *They* must have a stout, hearty nurse, and *you* must be relieved of their care; you must get flesh and beauty again."

Oh, the immense power of resistance that was rising and throbbing as though it would break through Hagar's chest! Yet she suppressed its violent outbreak; she wished now, above all things, to secure her place in her husband's affections; she would have yielded anything on earth to his wishes now, except this; nor did she understand his apparent indifference to their children.

With a sudden impulse she threw herself in his arms, and amid kisses and caresses implored him to spare her the anguish of this trial. Smilingly he returned her caresses, smilingly he refused her prayer, and smilingly withdrew himself from her clasp, and was sauntering away, leaving her pale and trembling, when again she recalled him with a gesture. He returned.

"Where are you going now, Raymond?"

"To charge Mrs. Collins with this same business of procuring a nursing-place for the children."

"Do not so misconceive me, Raymond; if I am now pale and weak, it is by a foretaste of all I know that I must suffer in opposing your wishes—for, Raymond, I *must* oppose them—I have no choice; none! I cannot put these children from my bosom—*can* not; you must know it."

"We shall see, love!" said he, with a beautiful, but mocking smile, as he left her side.

"Ah, I know your power of torturing me, Raymond—know it too well—but I must brace myself to bear it in this instance."

Half an hour after she met him at breakfast. He wore his usual air of elegant ease. He did not resume the conversation of the dressing-room, and when he saw that *she* was about to speak of the subject, he arrested her by saying, emphatically,

"Hagar, love, I will not have one word of controversy with you upon *this* or any other subject—I dislike conflict. You either will or will not comply with my wishes; without being subjected to any action in the matter yourself, you will, in the course of the week, have an op-

Digitized by Google

portunity of submitting to, or rebelling against, my will in this matter."

And Hagar was silenced. A few days passed, with no perceptible change in Raymond's manner, and the subject was not again mentioned between them. Hagar's secret uneasiness was perpetually betraying itself, and its expression continually repressed by the will of Raymond.

At length she grew to hope that this project was abandoned, when one day a respectable-looking woman presented herself at the door, inquiring for Mrs. Withers. She was shown up into Hagar's dressing-room. She introduced herself as Mrs. Barnes, the person Mr. Withers had engaged to take the charge of the twins, if Mrs. Withers should approve her. Hagar received the woman with kindness, but told her that she had no intention of parting with her children now, or as long as her life and health held out. The woman assured her that she possessed, and could produce, the highest credentials of respectability, capacity, &c. Hagar assured her that her objection was not particular, but general; that she could never resign the children to the care of any one; that Mr. Withers's too great care for her health had induced him to mention the plan to her, but that she had declined it. Mrs. Barnes seemed difficult to be convinced that Hagar's refusal did not arise from personal objections to herself; but at last took a reluctant leave. With her knowledge of his character and disposition, Hagar dreaded the return of Raymond that evening. With the wish to please him, and to disarm his resentment, she arrayed herself charmingly, and had everything prepared agreeably to his tastes and wishes, and awaited him in the drawing-room as usual. He came in, smiling, with his usual graceful saunter, just as the servants brought in the tea; the curtains were up from the arch, so that the two rooms were thrown into one. He met her as usual, and they sat down at the table apparently with their usual cheerfulness and affection. *He* seemed more than usually attentive to her wants. At last she said,

"I have seen the woman you sent me for a nurse."

"Yes, love, I know it; she has reported to me her rejection."

This was said in a tone of cheerful content that entirely dissipated Hagar's anxiety; her spirits, rebounding, arose, and she was happy.

The servants were, however, in attendance, and further conversation on the subject ceased. Presently they arose from the table and passed into the drawing-room.

"Shall I give you some music?" said Hagar, taking up her guitar. "I have been practising one of those low, lulling strains that I know you like—shall I give it you?" and she sank into a velvet chair and began to tune the instrument.

"You shall give me nothing—not a song, not a caress, not a word, when we are alone, until you give me your *will*. If I have condescended to answer your questions at table, it was to prevent servants from talking."

He was standing before her in his dazzling beauty, looking down upon her with an audacious assertion of invincible power of attraction and torture striking up through the brilliant softness of his eyes, hovering around the beautiful curves of his lips, and irradiating his whole countenance. Hagar turned away, veiling her eyes with her jewelled fingers, while she rested her head upon her hand. When she looked up again he was gone He did not reappear that evening. It was the first evening they had spent apart. Unwilling to give him any new cause of offence she had remained in the drawing-room until their usual hour for retiring, when she at length sought her own chamber. He came up after a while with his usual gay and graceful nonchalance of manner, but without noticing her by word or look until she spoke to him; then he turned and flashed upon her a smile, beautiful even in its taunting scorn, that called the indignant blood in flames to her cheeks and brow, and she became silent. Thus days passed. He knew how to torture her. At table—at the time the embargo was taken off their conversation—ostensibly to deceive the servants, really to afford him an opportunity of tantalizing her by the fascination, he assumed his usual manner of affection. Thus weeks passed, until the time approached for the arrival of their visitors. One evening he came home and threw a letter in her lap; it was directed in the hand-writing of Sophie. *This* seal was *not* broken; she almost wished it had been; she opened it. It contained but a few lines from Sophie, informing her that their party would be at The Rialto the next morning. She held her letter out to her husband, but he, with a taunting smile and graceful gesture of the hand, declined her confidence. A sickening faintness came over her. An unwillingness, nay, a strong and growing repugnance to the idea of meeting any of her friends—for whom, indeed, she had never possessed any very strong affection—just at the time she was suffering mortal anguish by this estrangement from her husband—a dread of the approach of the fair and gentle girl—her rival from infancy—a fearful presentiment of falling still lower in his esteem by the side of the loving and love-winning Rosalia, these causes all conspired to tempt, to overpower her; she arose, and falling upon his shoulder, with her hair dropping all over him, with a bursting sob, exclaimed,

"Raymond! oh, *do* make up with me! I suffer *so* much! *so* much from the loss of your love! If I could *weep* and expend a portion of my grief—if I could *swoon* and lose consciousness of it—*sleep* and forget it—*die* and leave it—*go mad* and defy it—I should suffer less! I can do *neither*—since I am not soft and weak! I am strong and hard—and the strong live through and suffer tortures that the weak would *die* under, and so escape! Yet the weak have all the sympathy, while the sufferings of the strong are not credited because not manifested. Raymond! oh, make up with me. I shall—not *die*—but suffer more than death if you do not! I am exiled—take me home to your bosom—to my home in your bosom again, Raymond!"

He supported her on his arm, and smiled down a flash of triumphant love into her face, lighting a smile in *her* countenance, too! She raised her hand, passing it gently around his neck to the back of his golden head, and drew his face down to meet hers; but with a quick and graceful toss, waving all his curls, he released his head, and smilingly inquired,

"And so you lay down your arms, and strike

Digitized by Google

your colors, my beautiful rebel? You subscribe to all required articles in my treaty of peace? In a word, you will place confidence in my ability to take care of you, and follow my advice in the management of our children?"

She did not reply. The smile faded from her countenance. He continued,

"You will place our children where they can receive better care than you can possibly bestow upon them."

She opened her mouth to speak—he arrested her purpose by placing his hand softly and smilingly on her lips, as he whispered,

"Stop!—no more arguments—no more controversy—no more talk about health, strength, and ability—about maternal love and duty—*not one word*, dearest! I did not bring you here, my beauty, for debate and opposition, but for harmony, love, and joy. So, in one word, Hagar, do you yield or maintain your opposition?—yes, or no."

"I cannot! cannot!" groaned Hagar.

He raised his arm, slowly stretching it out from the shoulder, while he turned away his head, and gently, but firmly and steadily repulsed her, pushing her quite away, saying, calmly, as she sank upon the sofa—

"Any overtures for a reconciliation, Hagar, must in future be prefaced by the unconditional surrender of this point." And he leisurely sauntered from the room. Not one word was exchanged between them, from that moment until the next morning at the breakfast table, when he said—"If you are not going to use the carriage, Hagar, I will send it to meet your relatives—it is nearly time for the morning boat to pass."

"I do not want it," said Hagar, and the brief conversation dropped.

He soon after left the house, merely mentioning as he went out, that he should be home to dinner at four. In half an hour from this the carriage was dispatched to the steamboat landing—at the same time that Hagar went into her room attended by Mrs. Collins, to dress her twins for exhibition to her expected relatives.

Following the bent of her delicate poetic fancy she would never dress them in anything but white, of the finest and softest material—nor ever place about them coral, amber, or gold, or any hard or heavy substance; and when she had dressed them, very lovely they looked with their little black, silky heads, and small features full of soft repose, as she laid them to sleep in the crib, so that they might wake up bright and beautiful when Sophie should arrive. But a deep-drawn sigh chased the smile from the young mother's face, as she looked upon her treasures, writhing in the thought that the duties of the wife and mother should ever be supposed to conflict—that the happiness of the wife and mother should ever be placed in opposition.

Then Hagar arranged her own dress, and sighed again to observe by her mirror how haggard she was looking—knowing this to be the effect not of her maternal devotion, as Raymond insisted, but of wasting anxiety caused by his tantalizing alternate affection and coldness—by her nights without sleep, and days without appetite, and consequently without nourishment. She had even to gather away from her face her beautiful ringlets; their falling, long and black, each side of her pale thin face, increased its pallor by contrast, while they gave it a hatchet-like sharpness. She had just completed her unsatisfactory toilet, when the roll of carriage wheels on the gravel-walk leading to the house, the ring of the street-door bell, and soon the hushed sound of several softly mingling voices in the hall, announced to her the arrival of her guests. She hurried down to receive them. To receive them! They received *her* in their full affection rather! for soon as gliding down the broad staircase, she saw the group advancing in the amber-hued light of the hall, she felt herself caught to the soft bosom of Sophie, while the arms of Rosalia were folded around her.

"Run here, uncle! give us your hands," exclaimed Gusty May, holding out both his hands to Captain Wilde, who caught them, and they laughingly formed a ring round the three women, clasping them all together in a close embrace. Sophie smilingly loosened the knot, dispersing the group; and Hagar giving her hand to Captain Wilde, and then to Gusty, opened the drawing-room door, showing them in—begging them to excuse her absence and amuse themselves, while she showed Sophie and Rosalia to their rooms. Then as she turned to attend them, Rose's arms were around her again, and she said as they went up stairs,

"And so you have two babies, Hagar! dear Hagar! Show them to us quickly. I do want to see them so much. I shall love them so dearly. I have done nothing but embroider caps and frocks for them since you wrote to us about them; so glad I was to have two dear, dear baby-cousins to sew for. Now I have come to be your nursery maid, Hagar, dear Hagar; not a useless parlor-figure, but your little nursery maid." So warbled the affectionate girl in her bird-like tones, while Hagar, won by her loving enthusiasm, turned and caressed her.

I said the house on each floor was divided by a broad central hall. The rooms on the right hand, first floor, were those of Hagar and Raymond, those on the left hand had been fitted up for the reception of their visitors. Hagar conducted them into their apartments; and when they had laid off their bonnets, brought them into her own room, to see the children. Their little nap was over, and the babies had waked up fresh and bright. Rose raised one, softly, tenderly, as though she were afraid of its falling to pieces even in her gentle hands; and Sophie took up the other. Rosalia went into her gentle love ecstasies over them, and even our serene Sophie was enthusiastic in her admiration of the children's remarkable beauty.

"But I should never be able to know the one little black-haired darling from the other," said Sophie.

And so said Rosalia.

"Put your finger on the cheek of Agnes—now upon the cheek of Agatha; don't you perceive that Agnes has firmer muscle, and, therefore, I think a stronger constitution than her sister."

"I am not sure that I can detect the difference," said Sophie.

Rosalia declared that *she* could, and that she should never make a mistake between the babies.

Raymond returned at four in the afternoon. He met his relatives with his habitual air of

Digitized by Google

graceful gaiety. The evening passed in social festivity and cheerfulness. Captain Wilde and Mr. Withers were, or seemed very gay. Sophie and Rosalia serenely joyous. Gusty, boisterous. Hagar's manner was restless and gloomy. Sophie at last perceived this, and lost her own cheerfulness; and soon after, as they were grouped around a table, examining some fine prints, Hagar felt her arm grasped tightly from behind, and Raymond's voice in her ear, muttering low and quickly,

"You are making your well-merited wretchedness apparent to Sophie—be more natural; for as God in Heaven hears me, if by word, look, or gesture you reveal your miseries, making me a subject of speculation to these people—you shall suffer for it in every nerve of your body to the last day of your life," and he let go her arm.

Her cheek flushed, and her eye brightened with pleasure,—yes, with *pleasure*. To hear him break the death-like silence that even amidst general conversation reigned in her heart—to hear him speak to her alone, close to her ear, even *harsh* words, seemed like a renewal of their confidential relations—seemed the more so because they *were* harsh words, because they expressed a command at last with which she could comply—conveyed a threat which implied a position, a right not yet abandoned; it was more *husband*-like, and she nestled closer under his shoulder, and taking the hand, the very hand that had grasped her arm, she stole it behind her, around her waist, as she whispered,

"Dearest Raymond, how could you think that I would willingly betray uneasiness—have I been gloomy? I will be so no longer—you shall see—dear Raymond, smile on me—say *one* gentle word to me; my heart has been starving—even the bitter bread was welcome—give me a sweet word, Raymond!"

"Don't be ridiculous," were the sweet words granted to her prayer, as he withdrew his arm, and turned gaily to make a remark about a picture to Rosalia, fascinating the gentle girl's attention by his brilliant smiles and glances. Hagar observed this, and her evil in ambush, her strong waylaying foe, began to give her trouble; nevertheless she struggled against its manifestation, and strove to assume cheerfulness, feeling that now was not the time to alienate him by offence. Her manner changed—flashing fitful lightnings of forced mirth across the dark gloom of her prevailing mood. Hagar was no actress—*this* was worse than before! and soon she caught the eyes of Raymond fixed upon her—a dire menace striking out through their softness, and perceiving her failure, she grew alternately more gloomy and excited as the evening advanced—so that every one. even the simple-hearted Rosalia, noticed it, and turning her dove eyes on Raymond to read the explanation on his face, saw there the calmness of his superb brow, and set him down as the blameless and injured party.

The family party broke up at an early hour. The ladies left the room first, and Hagar, accompanied by Sophie, attended Rosalia to the chamber appropriated to her use, and after seeing the timid girl in bed, and promising that the housemaid should sleep on a pallet in the room with her, because she was afraid "to stay in the dark alone," they passed out into the next room, the front room, which was Sophie's chamber. Hagar setting the candle upon the dressing-table, was about to bid her good night, when Sophie, taking her hand, detained her, looked earnestly, steadily, in her haggard face, and passing her arm around her waist, drew her up in a close but sad embrace, and said,

"Hagar, my poor girl, what is the matter; are you ill in body or mind, or both?"

"I am well," said Hagar, withdrawing herself from her arms.

"Yet I never saw you look so wretchedly, act so strangely in my life; what is the cause? *Do* tell me, and let me see if I can aid you by sympathy or advice."

"You can do me no good," said Hagar, pausing in perplexity a moment, as Sophie still held her hand and gazed pleadingly in her anguished countenance, "and Sophie, do not, if you please, take any further notice of my looks; is it not natural, by the way, that I should look rather thin after my illness, and with the care of two infants?" and coldly returning Sophie's embrace, she bade her good night and left the room. Several days passed in this manner.

The next Sabbath the family all went to church—all except Sophie, who stopped at home with the headache, Hagar, who stayed to keep her company, and Raymond, who remained for some purpose of his own. They were sitting in Hagar's dressing-room, grouped near one of the front windows. The babies were awake; Sophie held Agnes, and Hagar kept the other, Agatha, whom she fancied to be the more delicate, on her lap. Hagar was looking very attentively at her child. It seemed to her that for days the children, especially this little one, had been declining in flesh; she was beginning to believe that the disturbance of her own health was reacting upon the children, and so maternal anxiety was added to her other causes of uneasiness.

At this moment, Raymond entered the room, and throwing himself into an easy chair, inquired after Sophie's headache, and then looking at Hagar, who, sitting in the cross-light, looked ten degrees thinner and ghastlier than ever, he said—

"Sophie, will you look at your niece, and then at her children, and will you inform her of the fate to which she is dooming *them*, to say nothing of herself, by her obstinacy?"

Sophie's large eyes started, dilated, and turned in apprehension from Raymond to Hagar, from Hagar to the children, and she remained silent from perplexity. Then Raymond put her calmly in possession of the disputed point between himself and Hagar—keeping Hagar silent, meanwhile, by an occasional menace piercing through his gentle eyes; at ending, he said—

"Now, ever since you have been here, Sophie, do you not perceive that all three have declined in health?"

"Yes," said Sophie, "that is too palpable to be denied."

Then turning to Hagar, she said,

"Your health, and consequently your children's health, is suffering, my dear Hagar."

"It is from *anxiety*," began Hagar, when, meeting her husband's eye, and recollecting herself, she ceased.

"From *whatever* cause, dear Hagar," said he, "your health *is* sinking, and you will have at length to succumb to circumstances."

Digitized by Google

A message now summoned Raymond from the room, and the two ladies were left alone.

"Yes, dear Hagar, for the children's sake you will have to give them up."

All mothers love their children, of course; Hagar's love for her babies was fired with all the natural fierceness of her temperament; she would as soon have died as have had them severed from her. She answered,

"You do not know what you are talking about, Sophie; if you were a mother, you would know that between my heart and these children is an invisible cord, and the nearer I am to them, the more natural and comfortable it feels; the further I am off from them, the tighter and more painful becomes the tension. It is uneasiness one room off—anxiety one flight of stairs off—I know it would be agony one street off. In short, I cannot bear to be severed from them."

"You need not be severed from them; get a nurse in the house."

"But Raymond does not like that idea; he does not want the fuss of a nurse in the house; he wishes me to put them out."

"Then Raymond is cruel and unnatural, and his plan is not to be thought of for a moment," said Sophie; then she suddenly stopped, as though she regretted her hasty speech—a speech that Hagar immediately and indignantly took up, however.

"Sophie, it is not like you to be so very unjust and harsh. Raymond is *not* cruel!—could not *become* so, and you know it! If he does not love these children very tenderly yet, why he *will* love them, when they are old enough to notice and respond to his love; *besides*, I never *did* see a man who cared much about very *young* children, as we do. No! you must do him justice, Sophie; Raymond has very delicate and sensitive nerves; he cannot bear roughness, discord, or any other jar of the nerves that more obtuse senses could brave. He is not, like *me*, who have nerves and sinews strung for endurance rather than for enjoyment. He is an *epicurean* by constitution and temperament, and I do not know that there is any vice in that!"

"No? Do you not think that when the indulgence and cultivation of these delicate and luxurious habits are made the study and object of life, to the neglect, and perchance to the positive violation of high duties, that it *is* vice, and *may be* crime; already you see it has made him forget not only his children's welfare, but *your* happiness."

"It has *not!*" replied Hagar, indignantly; "how often must I tell you, Sophie, that he does not see how much he makes me suffer—at least that he cannot see a just reason for my suffering, because he is utterly blind in this—how *can* he be expected to sympathize in a feeling in which he does not as yet participate? You must excuse my warmth, Sophie, when you exasperate me!"

Sophie smilingly caressed her, as she replied,

"Forgive! I sympathize with your warm partizanship, dear Hagar; besides, to put you in a good humor, I will say, I fully believe that half-smothered in this down of effeminacy is a spirit of goodness that will never be wholly quenched, if *you* knew how to get at it. Now *I* can, always could, elicit this good spirit. You shall see."

Hagar did not altogether like Sophie's insinuation of possessing the ability to manage her husband; it seemed to impair the *prestige* of dignity by which her love had surrounded him; nevertheless she permitted her to leave the room, Sophie saying as she left,

"I am his mamma, you know, Hagar! I have a right to interfere, especially since he has honored me with his confidence this morning; besides, he loves me dearly, and always did, ever since he knew me, and always will as long as we both live."

This was true; from the first moment of their acquaintance, Sophie, by her serene temperament, disinterested affections, and quiet wisdom, had gained, not an ascendency over his mind exactly, but a modified influence in his heart. She sought him out, and going to work in her calm, matronly manner, arranged the difficulty.

The room occupied just now by herself and Captain Wilde was, after their departure, to be converted into a nursery, both upon account of its separation by the wide, central hall, from the apartments of Hagar and Raymond, and from its communication with the chamber of Rosalia, whose fear of sleeping alone, and whose love for the near neighborhood of the children and their nurse, combined to make the arrangement agreeable to her, as well as to others.

The visitors remained a week after this. Gusty May had kept so close to his little lady love, in view of the impending separation, as to give others very little opportunity of cultivating her friendship. And as Rosalia was strongly attracted to the babies, and as Gusty was as strongly attracted to Rosalia, much of their time was passed in Hagar's dressing-room.

You should have seen them there in their innocent affection and familiarity, blending child-like frolic with droll, old-fashioned solicitude in their care of Hagar's children. There Gusty would sit with Agnes across his knees, and a silk handkerchief spread over his arm, for fear the rougher broad-cloth would irritate her cheek, chirruping to the infant, and calling himself "its Uncle Gusty;" and there Rosalia, with Agatha, whom she always would hold on her *own* lap, because she persisted that this babe was the more delicate—yes! you *should* have seen *her*, with her beautiful Virgin Mary face, brooding over the babe.

And Gusty again! what an old granny he *did* make of himself! feeling the baby's fingers and toes, to see if they were warm enough, or cool enough, &c., &c., &c. One day Gusty's heart was filling with a jest that was bubbling up to the corners of his mouth and eye, and leaking out of every crevice of his countenance. Agnes had gone to sleep in his arms—at last as he laid her in the crib, and while he was covering her up, his joke overflowed as he looked at the serene little madonna before him.

"Don't you wish these were *our* babies, Rose?"

"Yes, I do *so* wish they were our babies—God love them! they are so sweet," said Rosalia, raising her large eyes to his and looking him straight through the head, with her vague azure gaze!

Up sprang Gusty stamping and dancing about the floor and swearing—no, exclaiming,

"You are a baby yourself! a *snow* baby you are! or, a fool! or both! why don't you get

Digitized by Google

mad? why don't you box my ears? will *nothing* arouse you? do you know I have been saying something very impudent to you?"

"Have you?"

"Oh! you go to Guinea! '*have you.*' Yes, I have! *You* don't love me, Rose—no, not a bit!"

"Yes, I do, Gusty; don't wake the babies!"

"You DON'T," thundered Gusty, "and I wouldn't have you to save your life." Then he came and fell into a chair, and looking at her wrathfully, said, "See here, Rose; I won't have you! I'll court the first pretty girl I come across. Why don't you answer me? what do you say to that? I say I'll court the first pretty girl I come across!"

"Will you?" said Rose, vaguely.

"Yes, I will! and I'll *marry* her!"

"Will you?"

"*Yes*, I will; and I know several pretty girls—you need not think I don't! sweet girls! that would give their eyes for me! And one lives at Havana, and one at Rio, and one at Genoa, and one at Havre, and one at Marseilles, and one at Mahon, and one at Gibraltar, and one at Constantinople, besides several others! Come! Now! What do you think of that?"

"It is very natural they should all love you, Gusty, I am sure."

"Humph! is it? Well, I am going to court and marry one of them before I come home! What do you think of *that?*"

"I think that will be very nice."

"And you'll have no objection?"

"Why no, dear Gusty, how should I?"

"And you'd be very well contented?"

"Yes, dear Gusty, if you were happy; I should be *so* contented; and if you would move over to this country and come to see us very often—for, Gusty, I should weep if you should go away to live for ever!"

Up jumped Gusty again—

"Oh! my God! this—this—this—*creature* will be the death of me!" then suddenly he dropped down upon the carpet by her side, dropped his face in her lap, spread up his arms over her shoulders, and sobbed, "oh! Rosalia—darling rose! I would not marry a *princess* while you remained on earth! my pure angel! Oh, Rose, love me! love me! *please* love me!"

"I *do* love you, Gusty—as hard as ever I can!"

"You don't—*don't*—DON'T! you little fool, you don't love me a bit better than you love old Cumbo!"

"Poor old Cumbo!"

"Ah, ha! there it is; you say that in the same key with which you would say 'Poor young Gusty!' if a cannon ball should carry off my head next month! Love me! no, that you don't! Oh, Lord! oh, dear!" groaned Gusty, getting up and sinking into a chair, "oh, Lord! oh, dear!"

"Are you sick, Gusty?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Whereabouts, dear Gusty? shall I get you anything?"

"Sick at heart."

"Oh, the heart-burn!"

"You shut up!" snapped Gusty, so loud as to wake both the babies, that immediately set up a squall of alarm.

Hagar came in, broke up the conversation, and quieted the children. Hagar was recovering her good looks, she was fully reconciled with her husband. So full, so complete was their reconciliation,—so happy was she in their renewed love, that her latent jealousy withdrew itself out of sight, away down in the deep caves of her spirit, until she nearly lost consciousness of its existence. Sophie had informed her that the marriage of Gusty and Rosalia would take place immediately after his return, and that circumstance gave her pleasure. And the last ashes were thrown upon the smouldering fire of her jealousy, by her observation of the full and free manifestations of mutual admiration and affection between Captain Wilde and Rosalia, and the loving sympathy of Sophie with both. Hagar would now have made a strenuous effort to cast out the devil from her soul, but that the wily demon withdrew itself into the deeps, until a more convenient season.

The period of their visit drew to a close. Gusty and Rosalia had a long parting talk the evening previous to their separation, and the usual amount of vows of eternal fidelity were exchanged. The next day, Sophie, Captain Wilde and Gusty took leave of their friends, embarked on board the steamboat, and in a few hours arrived at New York. In a week from their arrival at that city they sailed from its harbor for a cruise on the Mediterranean. The routine of the Rialto was resumed. The nursery was established upon the plan arranged by Sophie, and a woman engaged to take sole charge of the children. Rosalia wept a week for the loss of her friends, and then installed herself a self-constituted nursery governess in her chamber next the children. Everything went smoothly, harmoniously; Hagar's serenity was restored—Rosalia's tears dried—Raymond's gaiety returned now, and everything "upon velvet."

Reader, do but look at this family; the members of which were beautiful in their kind as the hand of God pleased to make them, each one, from the youthful father to the children. Raymond, with his elegant form, charming face, and graceful and fascinating manners, Hagar, with her brilliant beauty and wit, and Rosalia, with her tenderness, formed a group an artist or an angel would have loved to contemplate. Alas! that the angel sentinels could not prevent the passage of the evil spirit to their Eden! Satan, wishing to enter Paradise, took the form of a "stripling cherub," and so deceived Uriel, the Archangel himself; deceived "Uriel, one of the seven," that stood before the throne of God.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JEALOUSY.

"Foul jealousy! thou turnest love divine
To joyless dread, and mak'st the loving heart
With hateful thoughts to languish and to pine,
And feed itself with self-consuming smart:
Of all the passions of the soul thou vilest art."
SPENSER'S FAIRY QUEEN.

FROM a strong reluctance to take you into the deep caves of the soul, where evil is forged, I

Digitized by Google

have paused with my pen for hours. One can scarcely descend into the deep hell of passion and guilt without becoming saturated with the brimstone, scorched in the flames. As we enter the mystery of iniquity let us invoke the angels to guard us.

* * * * *

There is no meaner passion than jealousy. Exclusive, concentrated, intense love does not always and necessarily include jealousy, and very ill does that base emotion accord with the high spirit, dashing pride—the pride of strength that distinguished Hagar. Yet, reader, have you never seen a fine man or woman with one physical deformity, infirmity? and have you never been told that such a blemish on God's perfect work was the effect of injury sustained in infancy. I have seen a man—a Hercules in strength, an Apollo in beauty and grace—*crippled*—from an injury sustained in infancy through the thoughtlessness of parents. I have seen a woman beautiful as Venus, graceful as Euphrosyne—*blind*—from an injury sustained in infancy through the carelessness of nurses. How ill the shrunk and halting limb accorded with the handsome and manly figure! how ill the extinguished eye harmonized with the beautiful face! These misfortunes were not the faults of the sufferers, yet the effects of these wounds were felt through life, their scars were carried to the grave.

And, reader, there are mental and moral deformities, infirmities—*the effects of injuries sustained in infancy!* more baleful than any physical calamity can be, for they are the cause not only of much sorrow and suffering—as physical ills *may* be—but of much *sin*, as moral and mental wounds and scars *must* be, whose fatal influence pursues through life unto death and beyond the grave. Thus a spark of jealousy is dropped into an infant's heart, it smoulders through long years, and finally bursts out into a destructive flame in the woman's bosom.

A little, dark, wild, shy child, whose peculiar organization demanded that her shyness should be conquered by kindness, her wildness tamed by gentleness, her self-distrust reassured by confidence, is disparaged and neglected, while her more beautiful companion and playmate, whose extreme tenderness and sensibility required the bracing process of a sterner training, is flattered and caressed; until wounded by the loss of love, the slighted child grows doubtful of herself, distrustful of others, and jealous of her more attractive rival, hard, proud and defiant to all she did *not* love, suspicious and exacting towards the only one she adored; and the favored child, enervated by indulgence, grows more and more dependent on the love of those about her, more and more incapable of resisting any temptation that appeals to her through her affections; and these evils have grown with the growth, and strengthened with the strength of the children, of the girls, of the women. Alas! who can see the end of the interminable evil resulting from one small mistake in education; and from what wanton carelessness, even in well meaning parents and teachers, these mistakes are made; and sometimes how intentionally and in what good faith they are committed! Heaven knows there would seem to be enough to do to eradicate *hereditary* evil, the roots of sin indigenous in the hearts of children, without laboring to sow there the seeds of errors foreign to the soil. The low vice of jealousy was foreign to the high temperament of our Hagar; yet how it had been planted, sunk, trodden deep, and stamped into the bottom of her heart. The mean sins of indolence, selfishness, and vanity were not native to the pure soil of our Rosalia's bosom, yet how sedulously they had been cultivated there!

Rosalia, the petted favorite, whose soft nature, while it pleaded for indulgence, really needed the hardening process of a strict training—Rosalia, still further enfeebled by fondness, has grown softer and weaker year by year; softer and weaker, until from very tenderness she is rendered incapable of resisting the solicitations of any evil that may tempt her through her sympathies. Rosalia has grown up gentle, tender, lovely, but vain, infirm, and unprincipled. Hagar, whose wild and shy temper needed to be wooed and won, and ameliorated by tenderness—Hagar still further repulsed, hardened, and alienated by neglect, harshness, and caprice—Hagar is still high spirited and faithful, but inclined to entertain envy, suspicion, and jealousy; foul blots on a fine character.

Her jealousy of Rosalia was especially natural, and logical—I had nearly said inevitable—not only from the fascinating beauty of her rival from infancy up to womanhood, but from the very character of her ONE affection.

Rosalia, then, the beauty, the pet, and the rival, is domesticated with Hagar, the jealous and the slighted girl—and with Raymond, the poetic and the artistic epicurean—Rosalia equally fascinating in her extreme beauty, in her artless grace, and in the affectionate tenderness of her manner and her tone, soon won the warm friendship of Raymond Withers as she had won the affection of every man, woman, child, and beast, that fell in her way. She would have been a delightful addition to the circle at the Rialto, a delightful fireside companion in the autumn evenings, could Hagar have rid herself of the vulture of jealousy gnawing in the bottom of her heart. Yet do not mistake Hagar, do not think more meanly of her than she deserves—she was not *generally*, but only *particularly* envious of Rosalia; thus, had they both been in general society together, Hagar could have sympathized with, could have rejoiced in the highest success of her life-long rival, could have been contented to be obscured by, to be lost under the glory of Rosalia's charms and conquests; but here in her own domestic circle, here where she had "garnered up her heart," she could brook no intrusion, no partnership, no rival; and as in this boundless universe, there *was* but ONE, there ever *had been* but ONE whom her whole soul worshipped—GOD—so on this wide earth there was but *one*, there had been but *one* whom her whole heart adored—her *husband*. This was Hagar's religion and her love. In almost every respect she was as opposite to Rosalia in mind and heart as she was in person and appearance. Rosalia, with a generous benevolence, radiating from her heart as the beams from the sun, knew no exclusive affection, was "innocent of the knowledge" of any particular love. Hagar's soul, nearly destitute of general benevolence, was absorbed in one intense passion. Had a city been swallowed by an earthquake, overflowed by the boiling lava thrown from the crater of a burning

Digitized by Google

volcano, carried away by an inundation of the sea, or reduced to ashes by a general conflagration; had a nation been exterminated by war, pestilence, or famine, the news would have impressed Hagar very slightly. *But!* had the lightest sabre cut but marked the fair and regal brow of her loved one, her very heart would have dropped blood. Yet much as she desired his *happiness*, much she desired his *affections* more! she could have borne his *death* better than the *loss of his love!* she wished to be all in all to the man who was everything to her. Her jealousy was morbid as her love was extravagant. For her, his broad and high white forehead, in its superb amplitude and repose, expressed more majesty than the wild expanse of heaven itself—for her, his soft and deep blue eyes revealed more spiritual life than the purest dreams of her own soul—for her every expression of the face, every gesture of the figure, every tone of the voice revealed more poetry, religion, love, than the whole universe besides. Often when he would be writing or reading, or in any other manner occupied so as to prevent conversation, she would sit upon the corner of the sofa, and veiling the splendid fire of her eyes under their long lashes, gaze upon his form or face, watching its varying expression with all the enthusiasm of an artist, with all the inspiration of a poet, with all the adoration of a devotee, with all the love of a woman, a silent and unnoticed but enraptured worshipper! At such times, carried away, she would not think of herself at all—at other times a painful feeling or fancy of self-deficiency would torture her. All who love, who worship, think more or less humbly of themselves—this feeling is often morbid in excess or irrationality, and often itself engenders jealousy. In Hagar this was natural—she was not in her own estimation a tithe so handsome or *accomplished* as Raymond, and in the same proportion that she adored his perfections she depreciated her own attractions. For him she desired to possess all the gifts of beauty and genius, that she might meet and supply the wants of his being at every avenue, that she might be the whole world to him, as he undoubtedly was the whole universe to her. To her every face looked mean, expressionless, or sensual, compared to his glorious countenance, in which every passion, malign or benign, became god-like! to her every tone was harsh and rough, or flat and dull, compared to his love-tuned voice—he was her music, her poetry, her love, her religion, her life, soul, and final destiny—her spirit sought unison with his spirit, ardently, impetuously; she knew in heaven, their redeemed souls would blend in one—in heaven they would be—*one angel*. Call this morbid, call this extravagant, reader, yet acknowledge that it was no *sudden* passion, that this intense love of one ardent soul had been growing from the moment that the beautiful youth had lifted the little ugly infant to his knee, and thenceforth become her adoration, her idol, her dream of heaven. This passion had increased with years, every circumstance had only served to augment it, association and absence, meeting and parting, until their marriage, and then all the requirements of his regal will, all the sacrifices of her own wishes, all the struggles of her independence before it was subdued, all the death throes of her mighty pride before it was annihilated, served but to draw tighter, to rivet faster the chains that bound her heart to *his;* her separate soul, will, individuality of which she had boasted in her haughtiness, fled to him, cleaved to him, seemed blissfully, divinely lost in him—in heaven they would be one angel, that was her love, hope, faith, religion, her conception of heaven. Call it insanity, reader! many minds that pass for sane have in a greater or a less degree their insanity, in other words their master passion, or their besetting sin, or both in one.

Her conjugal love was her master passion—jealousy her besetting sin—and her jealousy was morbid as her love was extravagant. In losing her very soul in his heart, she wished to FILL that heart to the exclusion of every other object. I repeat it here, she wished to be everything to the being who was everything to her—she wished for matchless beauty, peerless genius, not that she might be generally admired, but that she might meet and supply every demand of his soul. But now! but now! here was one more richly and rarely endowed by nature with the power of pleasing than herself, one who charmed all the world, and who must, she fancied, charm *her* world, her universe away from her life. She wished to be—oh! *not* from vanity, but from love to please *his* poet-mind—she wished to be the fairest in her husband's sight—but here was one fairer, oh, how much fairer than herself—she wished to be the most graceful, yet here was one whose every movement was the very "poetry of motion"—she wished that *her* voice in household cadences, or in song, might fall the sweetest on his ears; yet here was one, whose artless tones were melodious as the fall of waters or the notes of birds.

Their evenings!

Rosalia would sit at the piano singing the low, sweet melodies he loved, while he stood at the back of her chair, turning over the music, bending above her, smiling benignly on her, forgetful of everything but of her and her song, sometimes joining his voice to hers—and she! how often at the end of a song she would turn around and give him a soft, beaming smile of affectionate pleasure, when she felt that she had pleased him. How little the innocent girl dreamed of the mischief she was doing—how indeed should she have suspected it? Had she not played and sung for Captain Wilde every evening on the Rainbow, and had she not always been rewarded by smiles, praises, caresses, and kisses, from Sophie and from Captain Wilde, too? No, she did not guess the evil she was causing—she did not guess it even when she saw, evening after evening, that Hagar withdrew herself from the instrument and buried herself in a distant deep arm-chair, or left the room. There *was one* who observed and defied her displeasure—Raymond, who occasionally raising himself from his recumbent posture over Rosalia's chair, would turn, and darting his eyes fiercely into the obscurity of Hagar's retreat, and fixing them sternly upon her, would bring her by a look back to his side, sighing, trembling, dejected—then smiling sweetly on her, and passing his arm around her little waist, would hold her there, and look supremely blessed while thus caressing *her* and listening to Rosalia's music.

Alas! that Hagar was not wise! Alas! for

Digitized by Google

the mental cripple, for the moral blind, for the injury received in infancy, for the faith crushed out! Hagar was not wise, did not understand —she continued, whenever she was permitted, sullenly to withdraw herself from the group, making the trio a couple, and oh! fatal sign, at last she was more and more frequently *allowed* to absent herself. Hagar was insane—yes, reader, in recalling the circumstances of this period of her life, in trying to understand them, I am constrained to say that Hagar was insane, not to have seen that *her* presence, *her* sympathy, together with Rosalia's perfect innocence and artlessness, would have been the immediate antidote to any poison that *might* have crept into the intercourse of these two friends—the antidote! it would have prevented the most distant approach of an evil thought.

Jealousy seldom or never prevents, frequently suggests and causes, the very infidelity it fears. No evil passion is stationary, it must increase or decrease. Hagar's disease was growing. At first she had only been jealous of his admiration, of his affection—*now* she was growing doubtful of his faith. Now, because wearied out by her sullenness, indignant at her unjust suspicions, even while obstinate in the pursuit of the pleasures and gratification of the tastes that excited her envy, he permitted her to withdraw from his side and isolate herself in a distant corner. As yet Rosalia's bosom was at perfect peace—the slight shadow of the evil thought, the thought now ever gnawing at Hagar's heart, ever by her insane jealousy *kept before Raymond's mind*, had not darkened its brightness, had not breathed on its purity. Will the evil retrograde, or will it advance until it shall overwhelm the gentle girl? Hagar, deeply as she cherished this envy, this jealousy, was yet too proud to breathe it to her rival; besides, it was Raymond upon whom her doubts fastened, not as yet upon Rosalia. The perfect simplicity, the maidenly frankness, the child-like affection of Rosalia, was too apparent and *trans*parent to expose *her* to doubt or suspicion.

Reader, how I loathe this part of my work! this analisation of an evil passion is as detestable a task as I should judge the dissection and anatomy of a putrid heart to be. If you dislike to read it as I to write it, you will skip it all.

Sometimes Hagar would arouse herself, and throwing off at least all manifestation of gloom or sullenness, would make an effort to regain her fast ebbing power of pleasing; she also cultivated her rare talent for music; but she could seldom succeed in giving Raymond pleasure. He loved melody, and her forte was grand harmony. The grand anthems of Haydn, Handel, and Beethoven, lost none of their grandeur in her apprehension and expression. But her soul was strung upon too high a key, to give out sweetly the low breathing music of the melodies he loved. Thus he luxuriated in the bright, soft shower of Rosalia, full of melody, and writhed when the sublime storm of Hagar's grand harmony flashed and thundered around him. Hagar saw this with anguish, oh! and this very anguish gave inspiration, gave additional force and expression to her passionate, to her gorgeous, to her awful conceptions of music! At last, however, she gave up the hope of ever inspiring him with admiration of her fierce tempests of harmony, and tried her voice and her touch upon the airs he loved, but here she failed—failed entirely. This was not her proper forte, and she had, as yet, too little control over her voice to manage it mechanically—to reduce it to the minor keys—she depended for much of her grand performance upon inspiration, and she had no inspiration for those low breathing melodies. Even suffering did not give it her; for in her hours of anguish her soul found its only expression in the sharp cry, the deep roar, the thunder of the grand harmony,—not in the sob and wail of melody. So Hagar abandoned the seemingly vain attempt to make, her music agreeable in the drawing. She cultivated the art—*her* art now by vocation and adoption—with all the passionate enthusiasm of her ardent nature; it became her solace, her soul's expression. Her days were divided between her music and her children. At length, not being able to find sufficient expression, her soul began to struggle for freer, fuller utterance—for the revelation of its *own* individual life and love, poetry and music—and Hagar became a poet and a musician by these steps; first she set the finest passages of her best loved poets to the sublimest strains of her most admired composers wherever they could be adapted; where they could not, she essayed to set the poetry to music of her own composition, as in the instance of Smart's song; and then to compose words to her favorite strains of harmony. At last she attained the power of revealing her *own* poetry—breathing her *own* music. She was but nineteen. Her music and her poetry were all impromptus of sudden, irresistible inspiration—the expression of her life at the moment—the electric flash of soul, bright and gone in an instant—they were unwritten, inspired, expressed, and forgotten. They would come, these spasms of inspiration, as the blast comes, and go as it subsides; come as the tide comes, and go as it ebbs; come, waking the stillness of her soul as the thunder comes, and go as it rolls into silence; come, lighting up the blindness of her mind as the lightning comes, and go as it flashes out into darkness; come as the storm comes, and pass as it passes. They would come at first unexpected, unbidden, impetuous, and irresistible,—nor could she send them away till a more convenient season, nor could she at will summon them. At length she found the spell to call these

"Spirits from the vasty deep."

She found her power, though now she played with it only for her pleasure. The pent-up fire of her soul—that burned in her bosom, rocking to and fro, lashing its shores as a sea of flame in storm—the soul that blazed in and out upon her cheek, and flamed through her eyes until their gaze seemed to scorch you; the soul found vent in poetry and in music.

And she would have been happy, *but*

in the grand diapason of her life was one broken chord, that left a blank, or gave out discord—her jealousy.

One evening, as usual, Rosalia was seated at the piano, playing and singing one of Moore's melodies. Raymond was seated near her, and his very soul seemed floating out upon the waves

Digitized by Google

of the music; presently he arose and went to the back of her chair where he stood bending over her, unconsciously half embracing her. She raised her eyes and welcomed him by a beaming smile, without pausing in her music. Soon, however, he turned and looked for Hagar; she was sitting in a distant part of the room, buried in the shades of a deep arm-chair—her head bent forward and resting on her hand, while her profile was concealed by the veil of her ringlets. She did not look up or notice his glance. He spoke to her; she raised her eyes—he beckoned her to come, but with a bitter smile, she shook her head in refusal; then his eyes fastened on her with a fierce anger, piercing through their tenderness, which now for the first time she did not heed; then with a quick and threatening nod, he turned away and gave his attention up to the music. Not one whit of this dumb show had Rosalia noticed. At last her song was over, and rising she left the piano.

An hour after, Raymond Withers entered the dressing-room of his wife. She had thrown herself upon the lounge, and her head was drooped over one end, while all her ringlets falling down shaded her face. He approached—and standing over her with folded arms, he said—

"Hagar!"

She did not speak or move.

"*Hagar!*"

She looked up, silently.

"*Hagar!* I say."

"Well?"

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"*Nothing!*—do not speak falsely, Hagar! tell me at once, what is the matter?"

She smiled a haggard smile, and rising, went to her dressing-glass and began to unclasp her bracelets. He followed, and taking her hand, led her back to the sofa, seated her, and stood before her, folded his arms, and looking steadily at her, said, sternly,

"This folly must be ended just at this point; and when I ask you a question, Hagar, you are to reply, and not evade it. Tell me, now, the cause of your gloom—tell me at once, without prevarication, for I will know it."

"You *do* know it," said she, looking up through her anguished eyes at his calm, stern, yet beautiful face. "You do know it."

"I do *not* know it, and I wait your answer."

"You *suspect* it, then?"

"I am not given to *suspicion*," sneered Raymond, "and I want to hear the cause of your sullenness from your own lips. Come, reply!"

She relapsed into silence.

"Am I to have an answer from you, Hagar?"

"Alas! why do you press the question? I am gloomy, I cannot conceal it, but I do not complain—do not *wish* to complain."

"Of *what* have you to 'complain?'"

"Nothing."

"'*Nothing!*'—false, again! for though it is true, in fact, that you *have* nothing of which to complain, it is false on your lips."

She did not repel this charge, but sat with head bowed, with chin rested on her breast, with clasped hands on her lap, he still standing before her with folded arms.

"Why did you not come up to the piano when I beckoned you?"

"Because I did not wish to come."

"*You 'did not wish to come'*—insolent! but passing over the impertinence of your reply, Hagar, *why* did you 'not wish to come?'"

"I was not wanted."

"I called you."

"Yet I was not needed."

"That was no business of yours; I beckoned you!"

"And I am not a slave, to come at your beck!" flashed Hagar, suddenly raising her eyes, blazing with defiance, to meet his steady gaze.

"No, you are not a slave, Hagar; you are a proud, fierce woman—yet Hagar, to-morrow, when I call you to my side, *you will come!*" and his hand dropped heavily upon her shoulder.

We will drop the curtain here; these scenes are disgraceful, disgusting.

* * * * *

The next evening they were grouped around the piano again, Rosalia was singing her evening song, Raymond Withers standing at the back of her chair, a little on the right, and Hagar stood on the other side, leaning with her elbow on the end of the piano, her forehead bowed upon the palm of her hand. Rosalia, without raising her eyes from her music, moved the light so that its beams fell more directly upon her notes—its beams fell also upon the countenance of Hagar, exposing a face so ghastly in its pallor, eyes so fierce in their anguish, that Raymond, evidently fearing lest Rosalia should notice her agony of expression, brought her, by a look and gesture, out of the light and into the shade of the background by his side; and passing his arm around her waist, drew her up to him, smiling down in her face, as he whispered, quickly, under his breath—

"Be gentle, tender, complying, Hagar, and you shall be happy; be the reverse, be rude, angry, rebellious, and you shall be wretched. Yet I love you, Hagar, and would prefer to make you happy; do not, while I love you, constrain me to deeds of hate."

She did not reply; she stood still and pale within the embrace of his arm, and remained there all the remainder of the evening, until Rosalia had finished her songs.

As the girl shut down the lid of the instrument, arose and turned towards them, she noticed Hagar, and starting, exclaimed,

"Why, Hagar! how frightfully pale you are! Are you ill?"

"No"— began Hagar, but Raymond, by a tight pressure of her arm, arrested her speech, and answered for her.

"*Yes*—she is indisposed, but a night's rest will restore her; go to your chamber, love," and taking a lamp from a side-table he gave it to her, and opening the door, held it for her to pass out. She went. Rosalia, springing up at the same moment, exclaimed,

"Let me go with you to your room, dear Hagar, if you are not well!"

"*No!* I am going with her. Good-night, dear Rosalia," said Raymond, suddenly starting up to follow his wife. Rosalia looked distressed, perplexed, and finally paced slowly and thought-

Digitized by Google

fully away to the chamber next the nursery, where she slept.

"Hagar," said Raymond, as soon as he reached her chamber.

"Well!"

"How did you spend the day after I left the house this morning?"

"I kept my room with a headache, with a *real* headache, the first I ever had in my life."

"Is that an intended reproach?"

"No, I only mentioned it as a fact."

"Where was your cousin?"

"She went to town shopping with Mrs. Collins in the forenoon, and drove out with the children in the afternoon."

"Then she was not with you all day?"

"No."

"Had no opportunity of questioning you about your ill looks?"

"No; I said I had the headache, and so I really had; and when I kept my room she understood it to be from a slight indisposition."

"But now her suspicions are excited—she sees that your misery rises from a deeper source than a slight physical indisposition—take care, Hagar, that she does not see the *cause*. She sees that there is trouble between us; be sure that you do not betray the reason, or, rather, the *un*reason of this trouble, my lady."

Hagar did not reply to this covert threat. She was not herself; a heaviness, a stupor, weighed down her spirit; a reaction of the excitement of her ardent temperament, an ebb in the high tide of her life, left her weak and powerless. She lay there upon the lounge in her dressing-room; it was yet too early to think of retiring, and Raymond, taking advantage of the temporary torpor of her faculties, perhaps mistaking her apathy for utter submission, sat down by her side, and said,

"Hagar, I am very tired of this, very thoroughly worn out with this; we have been beating the air long enough, let us come to something substantial. I will probe this wound of yours—extract the bullet that is festering in your bosom; tell me now, in so many words, of what have you to complain?"

"I do not complain."

"You *do;* not in words, certainly, but in manner; now what is it all about—why are you growing more sullen, ugly, and repulsive every day?"

"*Do* not ask me! Alas! have I not tried to be patient? *I* have kept my thoughts and feelings down, like wronged, suffering, and desperate captives in the hold of a slave ship, fearing to lift the hatches even, lest they should break forth, spreading pestilence and death!"

She looked so *unutterably wretched* as she lay there, with her small hands pressed tightly upon her brow, and as her lips, quivering, sprang apart and closed; that Raymond, pitying her, stooped, and placing his hands under her arms, raised her up, and laid her head upon his bosom, looking kindly in her face all the while, as he said,

"Hagar, I *do* love you—always shall, always *did*, Hagar, from the first instant that my eye fell upon you and caught yours—from the first moment that I, a youth, singled you, an infant, out from all the world as my own—for life, past death, and through eternity, recognising you for my own, knowing you for my own—*claiming* you for my own, preferring you, a little, ugly, perverse infant, to all the fair and gentle maidens of my own age, because I knew that into your little bit of a body was crowded and pressed the soul and life, the fire and spirit of twenty women—*claiming* you for my own, and waiting until you should grow up to womanhood, and never fearing or dreaming that any one would ever cleave my life down through the middle, and bear off the other half of it—*my Hagar*—for when was ever *I* jealous, Hagar?"

She clasped her arms tightly around his neck, and buried her face in his bosom as she answered,

"But my own, *own*—you know that I was not attractive,—that no one would wish to dispute your claim to me."

"On the contrary, I knew that you *were* attractive, and that Gusty May set up a very clamorous claim to you, and that you only needed to be further known, to raise many aspirants to your hand among superficial and impetuous young men like Gusty, who, if their eye is pleased and fancy tickled, believe themselves in love. No, Hagar! I trusted *in you*—not out of you—IN YOU, for the security of our love and life."

"My own! my own! you *might* well have trusted in me—*may* well trust in me."

"I did, and shall *always*. I married the little infant when I raised her on my knee at that wedding party given to Sophie and my father; I found my little wife then, and knew that she acknowledged my claim, saw in her splendid eyes, fascinated to my own, that she felt and acknowledged me."

"Oh, I did! I did! Looking up into your face I saw a soul radiating there that seemed to draw my spirit up to meet it! and I felt, Raymond, I felt that I had for the first time met a spirit that I had neither the power nor the will to resist in anything *long;* for see, Raymond! I, who defied Sophie and your father, told *you* the same moment, with my face in your bosom, that I would do anything in the world you wished me to do. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, love, I remember every single item."

"And I, who laughed and shouted defiance to society in following my wild tastes,—I, who so desperately resisted the growing and surrounding influence of your will, how I permitted it to close upon me at last."

"You did *not* permit it: you had no choice of permitting. You could not help it, love; *that* makes you my own, and my own for ever, Hagar!"

"Yes, but are you *mine!* as surely, oh! Raymond?"

"I love you, Hagar."

"You love me—you say so—will you tell, then, since this is an hour of tender reminiscences, of confidences, and explanation—will you tell me why, since you love me, you torture me so much; tell me why, when loving me, you make me suffer so much, and I will forgive it—indeed, I *have* forgiven it—could not help forgiving it!"

"You have nothing to forgive, love, and you must not use the word in reference to me. Yes, I will tell you, Hagar, for just now I am loving you very much, my own especial Hagar, and

Digitized by Google

perhaps I may never be in a mood to tell you again. Listen, then: I believe I am naturally, or rather apparently, very gentle and tender, am I not?"

"Yes, very; but—"

"At least! I have very keen and sensitive nerves, delicate features, fair complexion, and all that go to make up the idea of softness and sensibility?"

"Yes."

"That I got from my mother."

"Your mother! Ah! you never mentioned her to me before!"

"And shall never mention her again—hush! let us resume—I *have* sensibility, sensitiveness—*but!* away down in the deeps of my soul have a perverse spirit of great strength, power, and malice—where it came from I do not know; how it got there I do not know—but, Hagar, you are rather apt to arouse it—this spirit aroused, oppresses, seeks to subdue even those I love, when they resist me—this spirit in its awakened strength takes pleasure in its calm force of resistance, of overbearing and bearing down opposition, and the stronger and fiercer the opposition the greater the pleasure of the victory. It was that spirit that incited me last night, but it is not always in the ascendant—there, Hagar! that is the secret of the attraction your strong, fierce, proud nature had for me! it gives me plenty of employment, life, you see. Yet, Hagar, I love you."

While he spoke, Hagar's face had changed—one might say she was transfigured before him! her countenance grew radiant in inspiration as an angel's, and her voice was softer, sweeter than you ever heard it, as she said,

"I am glad you told me, Raymond, it has saved me and you—it is well you have told me. That spirit! it is, as you say, a *perverse* spirit, an *evil* spirit, a spirit from hell; and I will give it no further employment, no further life, Raymond—no more food; I will not nurture it by pride or anger. It is a spirit of hate; I will meet it by a spirit of love; when it comes to war with me it shall find so little resistance, so little to do, that it shall fall into death from inactivity."

"You, too, have your bosom's foe, Hagar—but it is not now, as you would say, 'in the ascendant.' Yes! you are jealous! jealous of Rosalia! Oh! *shameful*, Hagar!"

"Alas! it is true; I wish it were not; how can I help it?" said she, as the cloud came over her face, obscuring its glory—"*how* can I help it? It is gone now, the jealousy—but it will come back again, and nearly madden me! I know it will; and how can I help it, when I see that I cannot give you any pleasure, by all my efforts; you do not like my singing nor my playing—you hang over Rosalia's chair all the evening, and forget my very existence."

"I do not, Hagar! I never forget you for a single instant; how *can* I ever forget you, when your spirit clings so closely about me always?"

"Does it?" smiled Hagar. "*I* know it does, and I am glad you feel it, Raymond—glad you feel it, even at her side."

"Nonsense, Hagar! I love Rosalia—or rather I should say I *like* Rosalia, the fair, gentle girl, as I like her soft music, as I like a summer prospect, as I like the fragrance of growing flowers—as *she* loves her pet doves. I like her because, like all other fair, sweet, and melodious things, her presence gives me pleasure—a pleasure that I do not choose to give up for your jealousy, Hagar! So I charge you, love, if you cannot exterminate the 'green-eyed monster,' do not let him appear before Rosalia, and frighten the poor girl away from me. God! Hagar, if it comes to that, you will exasperate me to phrensy." He spoke with unwonted energy, but quickly controlling himself, he said in a more gentle tone, "Be on your guard, love—be on your guard; this is extremely absurd, very ridiculous, not to say unjust to me; how you worry yourself and me! Kiss me, my Hagar."

"'Kiss' you, Raymond! a thousand, thousand times!" exclaimed she; all her natural wildness rebounding in the spring of her spirits, "a thousand times, dear Raymond; and I will try never to doubt you again," and she clasped her arms about his neck, and drawing down his head, caressed him freely and gladly as a joyous child might. Her jealousy seemed gone for the time—a weight was lifted off, and that evening and the next day she went about with dancing eyes and with an exultant step, as if the spring of her little foot impelled the earth forward in its orbit! It was the first time Raymond had fully opened his heart to her, and she felt grateful for the confidence; she understood many things that had before been dark to her, she *thought* she understood *all*.

Had he indeed opened and revealed his *whole* heart? and if so, what had induced him, with his proud reserve, to be so communicative? Reader, had Raymond Withers spoken what we have heard him speak, *two weeks before*, it would have been "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing *but* the truth;" *now*, however, in the recesses of his bosom lurked a sentiment as yet revealed in words to no one, as yet unrecognised by himself; *but* yet a sentiment that was growing stronger day by day, that was already beginning to betray itself in unguarded moments.

I repeat it, jealousy seldom prevents, frequently suggests the very infidelity it fears. It has been said that "Unjust suspicion is apt to lead to that which is well founded. It is often very dangerous to hint an evil, though to warn against it: for constant suspicion of harm puts an idea into the head that otherwise might never have occurred; and this idea once fairly in is not so easily got out. Thus it is that unjust jealousy gives rise to real unfaithfulness. Can there be a stronger argument against too ready suspicion?" *

Poor Hagar! through her besetting sin, through her unjust suspicion, she had kept the evil before his eyes until he had grown familiar with it. This was the more dangerous, not only from his peculiar temperament, and from the extreme beauty, grace, tenderness, and artlessness of the rival she dreaded; but also from the fact of their isolation from the moderating and correcting influence of general society. But incited by a vague consciousness of this scarcely acknowledged sentiment, he had opened his heart to Hagar, exposing "almost" *all* its secrets, and now could she have continued to trust him, *her* faith

* Ramsay on Human Happiness.

Digitized by Google

might have saved his fidelity—could she have *continued* to trust him! but she could not—her waylaying sin could not be so promptly driven away for ever. Could an evil thought be dismissed, a guilty wish repressed, or a sinful passion crushed by one effort of the will, by one fell blow, many a moral victory we should see, many a moral hero hail, and the road to perdition be no longer paved with good intentions; but when blow after blow has been struck upon the waylaying foe, when after each repulsion it has retired only to rest, to gather force, to renew the attack, nothing but the highest moral courage and perseverance can keep up the warfare, can insure the victory. Hagar's waylaying foe had only been beaten back for a time; a few days passed and it returned in power, in ferocity, with violence; for *now* Hagar's doubts of her husband's fidelity of heart were becoming but too reasonable!

Reader, shall I shock *you*, and distress myself, by a recital of some of the scenes that disgraced the next two or three weeks? Hagar's confirmed suspicions, anguish, and terror? Raymond's stern, calm, implacable repression of her passion? The death throes of her suppressed and smothered rage? The indomitable strength of will by which he held her down—so that through all this, for many weeks, the innocent and artless Rosalia had no suspicion of *his* guilty passion, or of *her* racking jealousy! The poor girl wandered distressed and perplexed over the house, wondering in vain at a sorrow and an anger of which she could see no reasonable cause. If she inquired of Raymond, he would smile gaily and give her a light or an indifferent answer, and ask her for a song. If she inquired of Hagar, she would turn from her with a burning cheek and heaving bosom, without reply; if she pressed the question, Hagar would exclaim, in an agony,

"Nothing! nothing! don't ask me, Rosalia," and leave the room; for Raymond had said to his wife, while his hand, talon-like, grasped her little shoulder, and his eye struck fiercely into hers,

"Alarm this girl, give her one single inkling of the diabolical suspicions you cherish, and, as Heaven hears me, I will never see or speak to yon thenceforth!" and she saw and felt that he would have kept his word. Yet, though she concealed the cause of her sorrow from Rosalia, she could not act the part of a hypocrite; she could not bring herself to feel kindly, or to act kindly, towards the girl who, however unconsciously, was wiling away her husband's affections.

Rosalia grew daily more dejected—pining for the love, the tenderness, the sympathy and confidence, the free and affectionate intercourse with her friends, to which she had been accustomed; which was the great necessity of her life; without which she could not exist. She confined herself as much as possible to the nursery, and to Hagar's two children, who were just beginning to notice and to love her. She longed for Sophie and Captain Wilde, and for the sweet home-like feeling she enjoyed with them. She was beginning to dream of them frequently, and to wake weeping for them. She was beginning to regret the fears that prevented her accompanying them, to wonder whether it were possible now to go to them. She was very unhappy here. She felt herself in an atmosphere of coldness and vague censure, that chilled and depressed her. She felt strange and lonesome now, yet she tried to make herself agreeable to all, exerted herself to cheer Hagar when she saw her depressed, to amuse Raymond when he was grave.

One evening, after a particularly unsuccessful attempt to disperse the gloom of the drawing-room by her sweet music, she had sought her own chamber in despair; finding Mrs. Collins there engaged in sorting linen, she fell weeping bitterly upon the bed, and exclaiming through her sobs,

"Mrs. Collins! what *is* the matter in this house, can you tell me?"

"It is not my place to tell you, Miss Aguilar, and perhaps I even do not know."

"But what do you *think*, then, Mrs. Collins? oh! please tell me, it is not from idle curiosity, but because, because I do love Hagar and Raymond *so* much, and they are both *so* unhappy, especially Hagar, and they will not either of them give me a bit of satisfaction, and I want so much to know if I can do anything to mend it; tell me what is the matter, Mrs. Collins?"

"Young ladies should be very particular, Miss Aguilar; they may give trouble where they little think it."

"'Particular,' why, I *am* particular, am I not? I dress myself carefully and practise my music every day, and that is all Sophie and Captain Wilde required of me; and, lo! if I were *ever* so slovenly and idle, I should not think *that* would make so much trouble; and even if it did, I should think that they would tell me of it—but it can never be *that*."

"You do not understand me, Miss Aguilar."

"What is it then you mean, Mrs. Collins?"

"I mean young ladies should not make too free," said the old lady, looking solemnly through her spectacles at the girl. "No, they should not make too free."

"'Too free,' 'too free,' *how* too free?"

"Too free—*with gentlemen*."

"Too free with gentlemen! who is too free with gentlemen? You don't mean *me*, do you, Mrs. Collins; oh! no, you can't mean me, because I do not see any gentlemen to be free with, you know! No, of course you don't mean *me;* what do you mean, Mrs. Collins?"

"I mean *you*, Miss Aguilar; I mean that *you* must not be too free with gentlemen."

"But I don't *see* any."

"*None?*"

"No, indeed! to be sure none—oh! except Raymond, but then I love *him* because he is dear Hagar's husband and my relative, and because *he* is *always* good to me; so good! so gentle! so tender *always!* but of course you do not mean *him*, oh no! and I should like to know what you *do* mean, dear Mrs. Collins?"

"Have I not heard you speak of a lady, the mother of your betrothed?"

"Yes, Mrs. Buncombe; why?"

"You had better write to Mrs. Buncombe to come for you, and you had better return and remain with her until your people come back from foreign parts."

"Oh! I should like that, if Hagar would let me go."

Digitized by Google

"She will let you go, depend upon it."

"But now that I come to think of it, I cannot leave Hagar either; poor Hagar! while she is so sad, it would be a sin."

"Miss Aguilar, your cousin would prefer you to go, I am sure, and you had better take my advice."

"I am sure I should be glad to go if I thought Hagar could spare me, and I will see about it."

"*Do*, my dear child—and—do not mention that *I* suggested it to you."

"Why not, Mrs. Collins, why must I not? I don't love secrets, I never keep secrets—now why must I not say that you told me?"

"Well! say so then, my dear, and say at the same time that I think you sickly and *weak, very* weak, and that I think a visit South would benefit your health."

The old lady had finished folding and packing away her bed and table linen, and locking the clothes press she took up her candle and bidding Rosalia good night, left the room.

Poor Rosalia! by the miserable failure of her education she had been sent into the world, into life, beautiful, fragrant, tempting, and defenceless as the conservatory exotic. Nurtured in the warm atmosphere of an enervating tenderness, she lived only in the love of those around her, and pined when it was withdrawn as the flowers languish in the cold. Rosalia was drooping—winter was approaching, yet the face of nature was not fading, withering from the withdrawal of the sun's direct rays, faster than was Rosalia's heart in the surrounding atmosphere of coldness. The whole house was a chill clime, in which there was but one spot of warmth, the crib of Hagar's children. The whole day was a dreary blank, until the evening hour of music came, when she would try to please and cheer by her little songs. The whole family seemed strange, cold, or indifferent to her with one exception, Raymond Withers. *His* manner was always affectionate, his glance always fell gently on her eye, his tones smoothly, softly on her ear, his hand tenderly on her arm, and the doomed girl began, if not to love him only of all the family, at least to find return only in his love. As yet this affection of Rosalia was as pure as the maiden's love for all others.

Had Rosalia's intellect and conscience, her moral accountability for the use of time and talent, been cultivated in the same proportion as her sensibilities and affections, she would not have been thrown thus helpless upon the tenderness and sympathy of others; she would have possessed a self-sustaining principle, would have found occupation in mental resources. But this was not so; she had been fondled, praised, and spoiled, until intellect was half drowned in sensibility, mind enervated nearly to fatuity.

Days passed. Raymond Withers now too surely, terribly felt that his love for Rosalia was no longer pure brotherly affection. It was an intense and an absorbing passion. He began to struggle against its nearly overwhelming power—he began to avoid the charming girl. *Now* could Hagar have trusted him; could she have believed in the *power* of redeeming qualities that really existed in his heart; the solid substratum of good that lay beneath all this superficial allusion of wilfulness and effeminacy; her faith might yet have saved him; saved herself from much anguish. As it was, Raymond Withers struggled on alone against the advancing power of his great temptation. He might have struggled longer, he might have struggled successfully, but that the very means he took accelerated the crisis, the catastrophe. He began to avoid Rosalia; declined her music; evaded her questions; repulsed her gentle attentions, until the guileless girl, utterly unable to comprehend her position, grew wretched, more wretched every day, in the thought that her *last friend, her only present friend*, as in her heart she began to style Raymond, had fallen from her; and by the fatality that makes us set a higher value upon a possession that is passing away, Rosalia began to prize his affection exceedingly—to desire its continuance more than all things—to lament its seeming loss passionately—to strive to win it back. "The clouds came on slow—slower;" the clouds whose vapors had been collected in, and evolved from their own bosoms, and raised to gather black and heavy in their sky, to break in thunder on their heads!

Three circumstances combined to bring on the catastrophe of this household wreck, three circumstances, reader, that I wish you to notice, as I desire particularly to call attention here, and now, to the great importance of the formation of character in childhood and youth, and to the awful truth that the blackest treachery, the deepest guilt, the direst misery, the utmost perdition of men and women may sometimes be traced to the smallest, seemingly the most harmless mistakes in the education of boys and girls. Perhaps I have already been tedious upon this subject; perhaps I have dealt "in vain repetitions;" yet, in tracing the rise and progress of a guilty passion, can I be too emphatic in forcing the causes that produced this upon attention? These causes, then, I said there were three that conspired to bring down this impending thunderbolt.

First, Hagar's jealousy. We have seen how inevitably that jealousy sprang from a want of the faith that had been chilled to death in her heart by the coldness and neglect of her guardians in infancy. We have seen how that jealousy, by its violence, exasperated the anger of her husband; by its injustice (for in its commencement it was unjust), alienated his affections; by its pertinacity, suggested and kept before him the evil thought until it grew familiar. So much for the baleful effect of her jealousy upon Raymond. Its influence upon Rosalia may be summed up in a very few words—by manifesting itself in coldness and aversion, it threw the tender-hearted and guileless girl upon the ready sympathy and affection of Raymond for consolation. Do you now see the madness of this jealousy, and its powerful agency in bringing on the desolation of heart and home it feared and dreaded?

Second, Rosalia's tenderness—tenderness unsupported by strength of principle, heart unprotected by mind. We have seen that this softness was no more nor less than the feebleness of a character enervated by fond and foolish indulgence in her infancy. We have seen that this weakness made her dependent upon the love of those around her as the very breath of life; we have seen that when repulsed by Hagar's coldness, it threw her for sympathy upon the affections of the only friend at hand; one whom, of

Digitized by Google

all others, just at this crisis she should have been guarded against.

Third, the self-indulgence of Raymond. A delicacy cultivated and refined for years into an effeminacy that *seemed* harmless enough, yet that, as time passed, insidiously undermined his moral strength, rendering him daily more averse to self-denial, until he became incapable of self-resistance.

Could either of several good principles now have been brought into exercise, it would have, even *now*, arrested the impending catastrophe; could Hagar, by prayer, by effort, have thrown off her jealousy, have practised faith, candor, charity—could she have shown kindness to Rosalia, who was, as yet, entirely innocent in thought, word, and deed—could she have pitied and forgiven Raymond, who, as yet, was guiltless in act or intention. Or, could Rosalia have sought aid from heaven, and balanced her gentleness by self-sustaining strength upon its feet. Or, lastly, could Raymond have awakened and aroused his great latent moral strength from the bathos of luxury in which it was half-drowned; could he have risen and shaken himself like a lion in his strength, throwing off the moral lethargy stealing upon him; could he have risen as Samson arose in his might, breaking the fetters that bound him, they might yet have been saved.

Alas! They seemed all under a spell, while the cloud of destiny came on, and on. A gloom settled on their hearth that nothing could dispel, a deep darkness stole through the house that neither sunlight nor firelight could brighten, a coldness gathered in their home that neither sun heat nor fire heat could warm, a silence fell around them that music itself could not break—moral gloom, moral darkness, moral cold, moral silence. The darkness, the shadow of the overhanging cloud of impending fate; the silence, the stillness that precedes the earthquake, while the fires rage and leap beneath; the awful stillness of the coming typhoon.

CHAPTER XXX.

TREACHERY.

"He, in whom
My heart had treasured all its boast and pride,
Proves faithless."

EURIPIDES' MEDEA.

It was the first of November; a Sabbath day; it had rained all night; the dawn of morning found the rain still pouring down in torrents; it was a dark, dark day; *so* dark that a twilight gloom hung over all the rooms; so cold and wet that a damp chill pervaded the house. The family met at breakfast in the back drawing-room; a good fire had been kindled, but neither the cheerful fire nor the exhilarating coffee, could raise the spirits of the little party. Hagar was wretchedly pale and haggard; Raymond's gaiety was so evidently assumed as not to be mistaken, even by the unsuspicious Rosalia. Rose looked from one to the other in unconcealable distress. Seeing that Raymond tried to make himself agreeable, while Hagar fully indulged her gloom, Rose again, as usual, settled it in her own mind that Hagar was the offending, and Raymond the suffering party. When they arose from the table, when Raymond walked to the front drawing-room window and stood there looking out upon the black sky and pouring rain, and when Hagar rising withdrew from the room and went up stairs, Rose looked around in perplexity, in a sort of sad lostness, not knowing what to do with herself, scarce feeling able to keep her feet, for loneliness and dreariness. At length with sudden inspiration she ran up stairs to seek Hagar. She entered her bed-chamber without knocking, and found her seated alone by the window, in an attitude of deep dejection. She went up to her, and throwing her arms around her neck, burst into tears, weeping freely over her shoulder. Hagar quietly disengaged her arms, and gently pushed her off. Rosalia sank upon a cushion at her feet, and dropping her head upon her lap, sobbed out—

"Hagar! oh! what *is* the matter? Hagar! tell me, what *is* the matter? Oh! dear me! The house grows more sorrowful every day! Time passes like a funeral train leading shortly to the grave. Oh! I feel faint, sick, dying of gloom, of coldness and darkness in seeing your sorrow and not being admitted to share it, and not being able to do anything to alleviate it. Hagar! tell me; perhaps I *can* do something for you; I love you so much, dear Hagar! and surely *love* can help sorrow to bear her burden. Oh! Hagar! let me do something for you!"

She was looking *so* beautiful! *so* winsome! with her pleading, coaxing attitude and expression, with her soft white fingers pressed together, with her blue eyes raised floating in tenderness and love to her face. She was looking so beautiful! so graceful! so irresistibly charming in her childlike humility and gentleness! Hagar thought of her husband's heart, and looked at Rosalia. The fire flamed in and out upon her cheeks, burned on her lips, and shot lightning through her eyes;—rising, she pushed Rosalia off, and walked away.

"Oh! it is I! It is *I*, who have offended you somehow! what have I done, Hagar? dear Hagar!" exclaimed Rose, following her, weeping.

"Nothing! nothing! Oh! go away!"

"Have I not done something to offend you?"

"Nothing, Rosalia! Oh leave the room; do!"

"You are angry with me!"

"No! no! not with *you*!"

"With whom, then?"

"Rosalia! leave the room this moment when I tell you; haven't I said that I would not be questioned?"

"Hagar! yes, I will go. One word, let me say one word, and then I *will* go. Hagar, I suppose it is Raymond—you are angry with him. Hagar! oh! *do not* treat him so badly, cruelly; make up with him; please *do;* see how unhappy he is! see how hard he tries to be pleasant; but he cannot disguise his sorrow. Oh! dear me! what *does* make you two fall out so? Oh! dear me! I do wish I was in Heaven—*all I love here do make me suffer so much! so much!*" and she fell sobbing into a chair, while the dark clouds

Digitized by Google

lowered, and the rain pattered heavily upon the window.

At last Rosalia arose and left the chamber, crossed the hall, and entered the nursery. Mrs. Barnes and the housekeeper were both engaged dressing the children; they were now nearly five months old, and when they saw Rosalia enter, both began to bound in their nurse's arms, to crow and laugh, and hold out their hands joyously to Rosalia. The clouds fled from the young girl's face before the morning sun of their innocence and love, and a tender smile softened her gentle countenance as she floated towards them, murmuring in low music—

"God bless my darlings! God love my angels! *they* are glad to see me *always!*"

As the children were now dressed she sat down in a large chair, and received them both into her arms, saying, as they fondled on her—

"Now, Mrs. Collins, and Mrs. Barnes, *both* of you go down to breakfast *together*—you must breakfast together sociably such a dreary day as this; I will mind the babies till you come back."

It was the custom for one of the two matrons to remain in the nursery while the other took her meals. This morning, glad to be relieved by Rosalia's kindness, they set the room in order, mended the fire, making it blaze cheerfully, and then, while Rose stood up with the children, they wheeled the easy chair in front of it, and left the room together. Rose resumed her seat in front of the blazing fire; it was a large, deep, soft chair, whose wide arms held the maiden and the babies very comfortably. Rose loved luxury, and she revelled with the babies in that easy chair, while the fire glowed before her, and the rain pattered without.

Let me strike out a bird's-eye view of this family as they now stood. It is but daguerreotyping the sky before the descent of the thunderbolt Raymond walked gloomily up and down the dim vista of the two drawing-rooms, pausing now and then at the windows to look out upon the dense, dark clouds that hung like a pall over all things, and to listen to the beating rain. Hagar sat gloomily in her dressing-room, gloomily as we once saw her sit in her childhood in the attic of Heath Hall. Her elbows propped upon her knees, her pale face dropped in the palms of her hands, while her hair fell out of curl all over her; it was an attitude and expression of utter desolation.—The blackened sky, the beating rain, were unheeded in the deeper darkness of her own heart, in this deep darkness where was gathering the lightning, was lurking the thunderbolt. Rosalia still sat in the large chair playing with the babies, fondled by them, talking that sweet baby-talk, melodious, but unintelligible as a bird-song to any one but women and children.

Then the door was thrown widely back, and Hagar stood within it, with her thin face thrown out in ghastly relief by her black hair and black dress; she came towards Rosalia and paused, gazing with an expression of anguish striking fiercely through her set eyes. Rosalia looked up in surprise and distress.

"Give me the children, Rosalia! give them to me! they are mine! they are like me! they are *all* mine! Give them here! You shall not wile *their* love from me also! Give! give them to me! they are my only consolation. *Why* don't you give them to me?" exclaimed she, wildly holding out her arms. Rosalia, in fear and bewilderment, gazed on her with dilated and dilating eyes, scarcely distinguishing, certainly not comprehending, one word of her wild appeal. "Give! give them to me!" again exclaimed Hagar, snatching the children to her bosom, "and go, Rosalia! go! go! go!"

Rosalia got up from the chair, and pressing both small hands upon her white temples, stood in amazement.

"WILL you go?"

Rosalia dropped her hands, clasping them together, and so left the room, passed down stairs in a drearv, bewildering sorrow, and entered the dusky drawing-room. *Raymond Withers was reclining with veiled eyes, in a day-dream on the lounge.* Seeing him she went and sank down on the carpet by his side, dropping her head upon the side of the lounge in child-like sorrow and humility, exclaiming—

"Oh! Raymond, my heart is broken, *broken!* I am chilled to death in this cold, *cold* place—oh! Raymond, where on the wide sea are my friends? Send me to them—*do*, Raymond; I shall *die* if I stay here—*die—die!* I shall!" and heart-breaking sobs burst from her lips between every sentence. Up sprang Raymond from his recumbent position, exclaiming as the fire shot through his spirit-piercing blue eyes—

"Has Hagar! has that kite, that wild-cat of mine been teasing you, poor dove?"

"Don't! hush! no!—oh, don't call her ill names! don't—it is so dreadful in *you two* to quarrel so!" He was looking straight in her face. "It kills me to see it, Raymond! Oh! do send me to Captain Wilde and Sophie. I cannot please you two, though I have tried so hard to be good—oh! haven't I? But you don't love me, and you don't seem to love each other; and you make each other suffer so much—*you two!* and you make *me* suffer so much—and great God! what is it all about?" Her tears gushed forth again, she buried her face in the cushions of the lounge, and sobbed as though her heart were struggling in its death throes. *His* manner changed; he governed himself, or rather he resumed his usual tranquillity of attitude and expression, leaning over her fair head, while his elbow rested on the end of the lounge, and his moist and dishevelled golden locks trailed over the delicate white hand that supported his cheek; with the other hand he stroked her hair, stroked it down and down, while her bosom rose and fell, and sobbed itself into quietness. She was at rest—sweetly at rest. It seemed as if, baby-like, she had wept herself sleepy there, kneeling on the carpet by his side, with her face upon the cushions of his lounge, his delicate hand stroking her head. She was going to sleep; the sobs and sighs came deeper and at long and longer intervals; at last they ceased entirely, her head gradually turned upon its side, and she lay there in the sweet, deep slumber of a child that has cried itself to sleep. How beautiful she was in her unconscious innocence! Her hands lay folded one over the other upon the cushion, and her side face rested upon them; tear-drops sparkled on her drooping eye-lashes and on her glowing cheeks like bright dew on the red rose; her fresh lips were slightly apart, revealing the small pearly teeth, and her golden hair fell in moist and tangled ringlets over her.

Digitized by Google

He had tranquillized *her* passion of grief, but now as he gazed down on her sweet face, watching the color deepen in her cheeks, watching the regular rise and fall of her beautiful bosom, and the quiver of her crimson lip, moved by her breathing, an emotion arose swelling, heaving in his breast, like the mighty power of the subterranean fire rising in the volcano. It was advancing upon, it was overwhelming him; he must escape—he called her—

"Rosalia! Rosalia!" She started out of her slumber, and gazed up bewildered for a moment. "You must go to your own room, Rosalia; you are not well," said he, looking away from her.

"Alas! are you angry with me too? *You*, Raymond? Every one drives me away, every one! Oh! Father in heaven, what have I done? Hagar sent me away from her, and then from the children, and now *you* send me off."

And the child dropped her head, and wept again.

"Go to your room, Rose, go," exclaimed Raymond, rising and walking away in strong agitation.

"Oh! Raymond, you! *you, too!* to grow cruel to me! Oh, Raymond, what have I done that every one should repulse me—every one that I love!" she cried, following him; "oh, Raymond, if I have done anything wrong, scold me; I had rather stay here with you and be scolded, than go away by myself; tell me what I have done, that you all should repulse me so much, that all I love should drive me from them?"

He waved her a gesture of desperate rejection as he still walked away, until he reached the window, where he stood, setting his teeth sternly, folding his arms in a strong rivet, bracing every nerve, and staring with set eyes unconsciously through the panes; she followed him, stood by his side, pleading, cooing in her dove-like tones.

"Girl! you will madden me! go! go!" he exclaimed, without turning around.

"Tell me! just tell me how I have offended you all, Raymond? Oh! I am *so* unhappy! so lonesome—no one loves me now! tell me why?" She laid her soft hand upon his arm, and, bending forward, looked up in his face with her tender and coaxing gaze.

The effect was electrical! Turning, he suddenly caught and strained her to his bosom, exclaiming, "My flower! my dove! my lamb! my angel! Rose! *oh, Rose!*" and pressing burning kisses upon her brow and lips between every breath and word. "Love you! I love you; more than life, soul, Heaven, God! Love you! my joy, my destiny! *love you!* let me have you and die! give yourself to me, and the next hour let me die, die!" His arm encircled her beautiful and shuddering form like a chain of fire, and hot kisses rained upon her face.

And she! Tides of blood rolled up and over bosom, cheek, and brow, like flame, and passed, and then she grew faint and weak in his grasp, the color all paled in her cheeks, leaving them snowy white; the light fled from her eyes, leaving them dim and heavy with drooping lids—aye, the very brightness seemed to fade from her golden ringlets, leaving the pale yellow hair falling away from ashy brows and temples—she seemed fainting, dying in his embrace; alarmed, he looked at her—his reason returned—he bore her to the sofa, and laying her on it knelt by her side, gazed mournfully at her, half believing her to be expiring.

"Rosalia! oh, God! what have I done!" She shuddered from head to foot. "Rosalia! oh, I am *so* sorry, *so* sorry, Rose!" She raised her heavy eyelids languidly, and fixed them sorrowfully on his face, then dropped them as a quick flush spread over her face, faded, and left her pale, paler than ever. "Rose! Rose! forgive me, I was mad, mad." Again she looked at him mournfully, her pale lips moved, but no sound came thence. "Rosalia! oh, Rosalia! speak to me—say that you forgive me, or put your hand in mine in token of forgiveness!" She raised one pale hand feebly, but it fell heavily upon the sofa again. "You *do* forgive me, Rosalia, my pure angel! my holy angel! you *do* forgive me!" Rosalia shook her head sadly—Raymond dropped his face into his hands and groaned; soon he felt his hands touched by a soft hand that struck the whole "electric chain" of his being; dropping his hands he saw Rosalia looking sadly, lovingly at him, murmuring very faintly,

"Forgive *me*, the fault was *mine*—mine *first*, mine *only;* the sin of ignorance—alas! I have nothing to forgive! forgive *me!*"

"Rose! my Rose!" She sighed deeply. He knelt by her side and gazed mournfully in her face. She could not bear that gaze; raising her hands feebly she spread them over her face. He groaned "God! my God! why do I love you so! she was right after all—poor Hagar!" Deep sighs broke from Rosalia's bosom; she made many feeble attempts to rise and go away; he did not attempt to prevent her; but an overpowering weakness overcame her; she yielded to the spell that held her enchained, and so she lay—her face concealed by the veil of golden curls she had dragged across it; her frame shuddering from time to time until she sank in the collapse of exhaustion. And there he knelt—reproaching himself bitterly, yet sinning on—gazing eagerly with his lips struck apart at her pale cheek through its glittering veil of hair, watching, silently praying for a responsive glance. At last, he said, "Rosalia! darling Rose, go to your room, love; it is not safe or well to stay here—go, Rose;" she gave him her hand, and he raised her up.

He raised her up—she stood pale, trembling, bewildered, weak; and walked with tottering steps towards the door. He went and opened it—held it open for her—she passed; and as she passed, raised her eyes to his face, met his eyes full of anguish looking down upon hers, turned, and threw herself in his arms, exclaiming,

"Oh, Raymond! Raymond! you are *so* unhappy!—*I* am so miserable to see you thus! Oh! Raymond, is it I? is it I that have made you so? Tell me! tell me! can I dissipate it?—can I drive your sadness away? Would my death do it, Raymond? I would *die* for you! Oh! Raymond, it does not seem to me to be wrong to love you, love you so!—to love you so!" She hung heavily upon his bosom.

"Go! go! go! go, Rose!—go, mad girl!" he cried, tearing her away from his bosom, and almost fiercely pushing her through the door, and shutting it abruptly upon her—then walking wildly up and down the floor, like a chafed tiger in his cage, grinding together his teeth, and exclaiming,

Digitized by Google

"She loves me!—loves me!—loves me!—me first!—me only!—as she never loved before!"

Rosalia crept slowly up the stairs—reached her own room, and threw herself upon her bed, her senses whirling in a bewildered maze. The sound of the pouring rain became painfully distinct in the dead silence. The dinner hour arrived. The servants came in to lay the cloth. Raymond Withers walked to the window to conceal his still unsubdued agitation. When all was ready, the ladies were, as usual, summoned by a message. Soon Hagar entered. Raymond met her at the door, with a troubled, gloomy look, and giving her his arm, conducted her to the table. He looked around, and uneasily watched the door, but did not inquire for Rosalia. She, also, waited for the entrance of the girl, expecting her every instant. At last she said to the servant in attendance,

"Let Miss Aguilar know that dinner is ready."

The man left the room and soon returned—

"Miss Aguilar is not well, and begs to be excused," he said.

They raised their eyes, and met each other's gaze of inquiry at the same moment, but neither asked a question, or made a comment upon her absence—each was silent from a private motive of his or her own. Hagar supposed that her harshness had deeply wounded the sensitive girl (as it really had), and that that was the reason of her absence—while Raymond, of course, *knew* the real cause.

The dreary meal was over—they arose from the table—Hagar was preparing to leave the room. Raymond went after her, and took her hand, looking with a troubled expression into her face—she met that strange look with a sad, inquiring gaze.

"Where are you going, Hagar?"

"Up stairs."

"Will you not stay, and pass the afternoon with *me*, Hagar?"

She looked at him in anxious, in sorrowful perplexity.

"*Do*, Hagar—I need you so much now!"

"Ah! for want of more attractive company!" exclaimed she; and laughing bitterly, threw off his hand, and left the room.

Hagar, half repenting her harshness to Rosalia, and entirely ignorant of the scene that followed, went to the girl's room, to inquire concerning her health. She entered it. Rosalia was lying on the bed, with both open hands spread over her face—pressed upon her face—she did not remove them as Hagar entered. This Hagar attributed to resentment. She went and stood by her bed in silence an instant, and then called to her—

"Rosalia!"

She started—shuddered.

"Are you ill, Rosalia?"

A silent nod was her reply.

"Can I do anything for you?"

She shook her head, in mournful negation.

"Will you have anything?—speak!"

"Nothing."

"Where are you ill?"

"All over."

"What *will* you have, Rosalia?"

"*Solitude!*"

"Are you angry, Rose?"

"No."

"I suspect you are!"

"No."

Hagar went up to her, and drew her hands away from her face. The hands were icy cold—the face snowy pale. To avoid Hagar's glance, she closed her eyes, while a shudder ran all over her frame. Hagar went into her own room, poured out a glass of wine, and brought it to her. She waved it off, and turned her face to the wall. After some further fruitless attempts to aid her, and after finding that all her efforts increased the girl's distress, Hagar left the room, thoroughly persuaded that Rosalia was sulking with *her*, and determining to send Mrs. Collins in to her. The housekeeper entered—there was a sternness about the expression of her shut mouth and solid-looking chin, that we have never seen there before, as she looked at the languid girl.

"What is the matter, Miss Aguilar?" she inquired, rather abruptly.

Rose uncovered her face, and looking up with an agonized, an imploring expression, said—

"I am sick all over, and I want to go to Sophie!"

"I think if that were possible it would be very well."

"Is it not possible, then—can't I—oh, *can't* I go?"

"Your friends are on the sea, Miss Aguilar, I presume."

"And is there *no* way to get to them—no way, oh, my God! to escape?"

"I do not know much of these things, Miss Aguilar, but I should think it were quite out of the question."

"No way, oh! my God, to escape!"

"What do you mean, Miss Aguilar, by that?"

"I mean—oh! I mean—that I am *crazy*—and have no one to love me and take care of me *till I come to my senses!*" said Rose, pressing her temples. "I am done to death—*done to death!*"

"I do not understand you, Miss Aguilar," said the old lady, seating herself, and looking steadily and severely at the pale girl.

"Don't look so hard at me, Mrs. Collins, please don't—oh! I am *crazy!*—yes, I must be!—yes, I must be! Oh! Mrs. Collins, I have been delirious—delirious within the last hour, and I am insane still!—*Insane still!* I—oh! my God!—I did not know before that people *could* be crazy and *know*, and not be able to get well!"

"*What has turned you crazy, Miss Aguilar?*"

"Oh! don't call me 'Miss Aguilar,' *every time*, and don't look so hard at me!" cried Rose, covering her face with her hands.

"God is looking at you, Miss Aguilar, and you cannot cover your face from Him!" said the old lady, severely.

"I do not wish to, indeed," replied Rose, meekly, uncovering her face again, "I do not wish to; but I *do* wish He would take me away—would catch me up from the earth—would send my angel mother to fetch me!"

Mrs. Collins did not reply to this; she sat by the bed, seemingly unwilling to converse with her. At last she said—

Digitized by Google

"Did you ever mention to your cousin your wish to return to Maryland, Miss Aguilar?"

"No, I did not."

The old lady looked disapprobation, but inquired—

"May I presume to ask *why*, Miss Aguilar?"

"I have made several attempts, but Hagar gives me no opportunity of speaking to her at all!"

"Not to-day, Miss Aguilar?—not a half-hour before this?"

"Oh, to-day—to-day—I *could* not talk to her—could not *look* at her or bear her look!"

The old lady now grew positively pale, and shrank away from the side of the girl. Rosalia followed the gesture with deprecating eyes.

"You must excuse me, Miss Aguilar, but all this is very horrible—very!"

She was silent again for a long time, and then she said—

"You spoke, Miss Aguilar, of your wish to follow your friend, Mrs. Wilde; as that is quite impossible, why not now go back to Maryland to your future moth—to Mrs. Buncombe?"

"Yes, yes; I will do that, if they will let me—I wish to do it!"

"Mrs. Withers will very gladly assist your departure, Miss Aguilar."

"Will *you* ask her?"

"I will."

"Go now and do it; let it all be arranged during these rainy days, so that as soon as the bad weather is over I shall be able to set out; it is no use to put off the journey until we can write to Emily and she can reply to our letter or come after me; *that* would make the interval too long. Some one will be travelling down to Washington just at this season. Yes, members of Congress will be going soon, and Hagar can send me with some gentleman's family; or, at all events, I can travel alone—I am not afraid of water now! not now! My God! not of death in any shape or form. Go now! go to Hagar, Mrs. Collins!"

The old lady arose and left the room, full of the darkest suspicions; she found Hagar in the nursery. After a little desultory conversation, she remarked, as composedly as she could—

"I have just come from the chamber of Miss Aguilar; I think there is nothing as yet the matter with her health of body; her mind seems disturbed, disordered, depressed."

Hagar, of course, knew *that;* but attributed it to the wounded spirit—wounded by her own recent harshness. The old lady continued—

"And she expresses a wish to return to Maryland!"

"Indeed! Does she?" exclaimed Hagar, looking up.

"Yes, and I think the change of air and scene would benefit her spirits.'

The color was coming back to Hagar's cheek, and the light to her eye. The old lady went on to say—

"Her health is delicate, I think, and our climate is severe—very severe—and if I might venture, I should advise that she be sent down without delay to Maryland, to spend the winter."

Hagar was sitting in an attitude of aroused and hopeful thought, with her elbow resting on the crib, finger on her lip and eyes raised, while life and light were tiding back, till face and ringlets flashed bright again.

"And she really wishes this, Mrs. Collins?"

"She really does."

"Does she complain of her position here?"

"N-no, not exactly—certainly she complains of *no one*—so far from that, she speaks as usual with the utmost affection of all."

Mrs. Collins, noticing the eloquent expression of returning hope upon Hagar's face, ventured to remark—

"And there are *other* reasons why this journey should be hurried, Mrs. Withers"—

But, with a dignified gesture of the hand, Hagar arrested her speech.

"No matter for other reasons, Mrs. Collins; you have given enough. I will write immediately to Mrs. Buncombe, and you will be so kind as to go to Miss Aguilar's room, and tell her that every arrangement shall be made for her journey without delay; tell her I should like to see and converse with her as soon as she feels well enough to receive me; and as you go, send the house-maid in to me."

The housekeeper left the room, and soon the maid entered it.

"Sarah, go to Miss Aguilar, and tell her that you are ready to assist her in preparing her wardrobe for her journey—she is going to make a visit."

Raymond received the news of Rosalia's intended departure in gloomy silence. It was a strange thing to see Raymond Withers gloomy—he who had borne himself through all scenes with such gay nonchalance. Rosalia appeared at the breakfast-table next morning, looking pale and pensive, and withdrew from it as soon as she possibly could.

"That girl looks badly," remarked Raymond, making an effort at conversation.

"Yes," replied Hagar.

"Have you taken it into consideration that she cannot travel alone down South?"

"Yes; she wishes you to inquire and procure for her an escort."

"I will do so," said he, and turned to receive the packet of letters and papers from the servant, who had just brought them from the Post-office. He opened one or two letters, ran his eyes over them, and carelessly threw them aside. One, however, caught his particular attention; he started on seeing it—he read it with great care. Hagar arose to leave the room, but he arrested her by a gesture; she returned and sat down; he continued his reading carefully to the end, folded the letter, and holding it in his hand, fell into thought, lost consciousness of his wife's presence, and was only aroused from his lethargy by her rising a second time to leave the room.

"Stay, Hagar," said he.

"But wherefore? I wish to go to the children, and you seem quite absorbed in thought; no bad news I trust, though indeed there is no one from whom it is likely we should hear bad news."

"No, there is no bad news—but this *is* rather an important mail," said he, laying the letter on the table before her. "You may remember that Wilde has been teasing me for a long time to accept his influence in procuring me a post under the present administration, with which his political friends have considerable influence. I laughingly accepted his kind offer when he was here

Digitized by Google

last fall, and permitted him to write his friends, Secretary ———, and Judge ———, about me. Here is the result. I need not say that it was wholly unexpected by me."

He handed her the letter—it was a notification of his appointment to the post of Consul at the port of ———, in the Mediterranean.

"And you will accept it?" inquired she.

"And I will accept it."

"And take your family with you."

"By no means, love—what should I do with you and the children on the voyage? in your present condition of nervous irritability too? It is not to be thought of for an instant!"

"Oh! Raymond," she pleaded, involuntarily clasping her hands and raising her eyes imploringly to his face; "oh! Raymond!"

"Oh, *nonsense*, love! no extravagance, now, I beg of you—not one word, Hagar! I cannot bear it, cannot be annoyed, cannot!"

"But, Raymond!" she persisted, laying her small hand gently on his arm, and looking up in his face seeking to catch his eye—"but, Raymond!"

"But *folly*, Hagar! do not trouble me; I will have no controversy about this—I hate controversy, as you very well know—I will do what I think best for us all—and you must be content with that—or *appear* content, and stop troubling me!" said he, averting his face.

She was standing by his side, leaning over his arm, and now she passed her hand up around his head, and trying gently to turn it around, said, "Raymond, look at me; *please* look in my face." He looked down in her eyes inquiringly. She said lowly, gently, "I have a secret to tell you, Raymond; before you come back, I shall be a mother *again*," and dropped her head upon his bosom too soon to see the slightly startled eye and the frown of vexation that contracted his smooth brow as he held her there; presently he led her to a chair and seated her—stood by her half embracing her shoulder, stroking her head. "*Now* you will not go, Raymond; or if you go, you will take us with you, will you not?"

He did not reply for some time, and then he replied gently, "Be reasonable, Hagar, always. I am sorry, Hagar, for this—yet you know, love, that men frequently have to leave their wives under such circumstances; men of the army and navy all have this trial to bear."

"But it is *their* profession, *their* duty, *they* cannot avoid it; but you can, can you not, dear Raymond? You can, *at least*, take us with you; a privilege which, with very rare exceptions, is not enjoyed by those in the professions you name."

"Dear Hagar, you try my patience! Come, you are taking advantage of my sympathies at this moment, to worry me; have done with it—listen to me! this administration is in its third year—I shall probably hold this office nearly two years; if the same party remain in power, I shall probably continue to hold it—in which case I shall send for you and your children."

"And you *will* go?"

"Yes, love."

"And it will be rather more than a year, nearly two years, before you return or send for us?"

"Yes, love, but what is that? Officers commonly leave their wives for *three* years at a time. Come, Hagar! do not be selfish, brace yourself to bear a little trial that is not an unusual one among your sex."

"Oh! but this is so sudden! Great God!" and Hagar, clasping her hands, left the drawing-room and went to the nursery. Raymond Withers walked up and down the two rooms, with his hands clasped behind his back, with a fixed eye and a curdled cheek, not noticing the boy who entered to clear the table, and who was watching him attentively, and who on going to the kitchen, remarked in a suppressed whisper to the cook,

"Well! I never did see any man look so much as though he were making a sale of himself to the devil, as our Mr. Withers does!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LONE ONE.

What is the worst of woes that wait on age?
What stamps the wrinkle deepest on the brow?
To view each loved one blighted on life's page,
And be alone on earth—as I am now.

THE preparations for Rosalia's departure for Maryland went on rapidly. A letter had been received from Emily Buncombe, in reply to the one written by Hagar, in which she expressed the great degree of pleasure with which she should expect the arrival of her dear adopted daughter Rosalia. Rose had wept over the letter—there was none of the pleasure expressed in her countenance, that might naturally have been expected. Raymond observed it, but *he* appeared fully occupied with the winding up of his business, and with making arrangements for a visit to Washington, to receive his credentials previous to his departure on his foreign mission. It seemed the most natural thing in the world, that Raymond Withers should propose to take his young ward and cousin under his escort for the journey, and to see her safe in the house of her future mother-in-law—so perfectly natural and proper, that Hagar could find no word to say in objection—and Rosalia—but when did Rose ever object to any course proposed for her by another? She went on sorrowfully with her quiet preparations, and in a few days these were completed. The day of their departure drew near, and Hagar sank deeper into despair, that sometimes broke out into expressions of wildest anguish. Raymond wore a dark cloud of gloomy abstraction, of morose determination, from which the lightnings of a sudden anger would sometimes flash, when he would be exasperated by the wild and passionate grief and resistance of Hagar—sudden outbreaks of phrensied opposition to the overwhelming destiny coming on, slowly coming on, surely coming on—she felt it.

"It is unreasonable, Hagar, this wild grief at the thoughts of an absence of but two weeks, Hagar, only two weeks. I shall be back again in even *less* time, probably, and remain with you a month before my final departure."

"Ah! ah!"

"Do you not believe me, then?"

"Yes, I believe you! I believe you! but—"

Digitized by Google

"But, *what?*"

"I cannot! cannot shake off this avalanche of cold horror from my soul—it seems like direst doom bearing me down and down to perdition; it seems as though the end of all things were at hand."

"Hagar, it is your health, morbid nerves—you will get over this in a few days, after I am gone."

"After you are gone—yes, after you are gone, when all is silent for want of your voice, when all is dark for want of your glance, when my whole soul will starve for your presence—but you will no longer see my paleness, hear my moaning, or be troubled with my heart's sorrow!" she would exclaim wildly and bitterly.

"No more of this! you SHALL NOT excite yourself thus in my presence. I WILL NOT have it, you selfish and absurd woman! bah! why do you compel me to speak to you in this manner? be easy, love! go play with the babies, sing a song, take a ride, practise a piece of music, swallow an opiate, read a novel—do anything, rather than cling about and around me so tightly, that I shall have to hurt you in shaking you off. Go! go lie down, read a play."

"Read a play!" exclaimed she, bitterly.

"Well, go hang yourself, then!" exclaimed he, savagely, breaking from her, flinging himself out of the room, and slamming the door after him.

Hagar stood where he had left her, transfixed with astonishment; this was the first occasion upon which she had ever seen him depart from the Chesterfieldian propriety of his usual self-possession. Slowly she recovered her senses; slowly left the room and sought her children. A death-like calmness settled on her pallid brow, she made no further opposition to his plans, asked no further questions of his purposes.

The night before the parting came. Their trunks were all down in the piazza—the carriage was even packed with the small bundles, so that there should be as little delay as possible in the morning, as they wished to reach the village in time to meet the morning boat, which passed about the break of day. Supper was served an hour earlier, so that they might all retire to rest sooner, and be up in time. At that supper and during that evening, Hagar's manner was quiet—quiet as death, except that from under her heavy pallid eyelids, flamed out a gloomy, baleful fire, as she would fix her eyes upon Rosalia; in her cheek came in and out a flickering fire; her bosom would heave, her teeth snap with a spring, and her hand clinch convulsively, while a spasm would convulse her form. Raymond watched her with visible anxiety, sought to catch her now murky and fiery eye; in vain—he could not control or affect her in any way. They arose from the table.

"Give us one more song in this room, Rosalia, before you leave it," said Raymond Withers, leading her to the instrument—at the touch of his hand, waves of blood bathed the girl's bosom, neck, and face, as a fire bath, and then receding, left her ashy pale—and tottering on the verge of a swoon, she sank into the music-chair, ran her fingers feebly and mechanically over the keys, striking a faint prelude, opened her lips to sing, stopped, dropped her head upon the music, and burst into tears—then rising suddenly, left the room. Neither Raymond nor Hagar attempted to prevent her—they looked at each other.

"What an evening!—my last evening at home!"

"Your *last!*"

"Well! my last for a week or two."

"Ah!"

"What is the matter with *you* this evening, Mistress Hagar?"

"I want a ride, an opiate, or a novel!" laughed she, sardonically, then suddenly she sank into a chair, and subsided into the gloom of her former manner—an excited gloom like a smouldering fire—he watched her uneasily.

"Hagar."

"Well!"

"Where are your children?"

"Asleep in the nursery, of course; where else should they be?"

"Do you not usually see them to bed yourself at this hour?"

"Yes! but to-night I put them to sleep an hour earlier, that I might spend the evening—*your last evening*, Raymond, with you!" exclaimed she, sarcastically.

"Hagar! there is a lurking phrensy in your look and manner that annoys me."

"Ah!"

"Makes me uneasy."

"At last!"

"There is danger in you."

"THERE IS!" she exclaimed, starting with wild energy.

"HAGAR!"

He caught her burning hands and held them with the strength of a vice, trying to catch her fiery and flying glances; at last they fell and struck into his own, quenching their fire in the cold, calm, liquid gaze of his mesmerizing eyes, then—

"Hagar!" he said, very softly, "why, what a temperament you have—will *nothing* quiet you?"

She kept her gloomy eyes fixed upon him, and was about to reply, when the door opened softly, and Rosalia re-entered the room. Hagar started violently, and shuddered at her sudden apparition, but Raymond continued to hold one hand to prevent her moving, as Rosalia passed up to the piano, and resuming her seat, with an air of forced calmness, said—

"I have come back to sing you the song, as this is the last evening of my stay."

There was an air of effort, of painful effort, about her singing and her deportment generally, very distressing to see, as if the poor girl had forced herself to a measure exceedingly repugnant to herself, for the sake of giving pleasure, or of deprecating blame. Raymond did not approach her while she sang; indeed he dared not yet leave the side of Hagar, who was now looking more like a half mesmerized maniac than anything else. By the time Rosalia had ceased singing, a servant entered with the chamber lamps on a waiter, and accepting that as a signal for breaking up, Raymond handed one to Rose, and bidding her good-night, opened the door and dismissed her. Hagar, with wild eyes, sprang suddenly past him, and arresting Rose by grasping her arm, exclaimed,

"Rosalia! secure your door on the inside to-

Digitized by Google

night! *do it!*" and letting fall her arm she returned to the room, and sank into her seat. Raymond was standing before her with folded arms and severe brow.

"What is the meaning of this new phrensy, Hagar?"

She looked up at him with fiery and blood-shot eyes.

"Raymond! I am mad! I am terrified! I am in the power of a passion I cannot control! a fiend I cannot resist! All this evening! all this evening! I have been impelled by an almost irresistible impulse! attracted by a terrible fascination! *to a crime! to a* CRIME! hold me, hold me, Raymond! keep me away from myself—I am going mad! I am! I am!" her eyes were fiercely blazing wide, and every vein and nerve visibly throbbing. He went to the side-board, poured out and handed her a large glass of water, which she immediately drained. Then he leaned his elbow on the table, and bending forward, spoke to her—

"See here, Hagar, you *are not* mad, and you *shall not* go mad! Listen to me, and I will bring you to your reason very soon, and very thoroughly. You give way to all sorts of wild impulses—always *did*, always *will*—extravagant in every emotion, frantic in every passion; from the love of your children to the hatred of your fancied rival; from the adoration visited upon me to the worship tendered God; from your taste for horses, to your talent for harmony; all, all extravagance; I naturally expect it from you; but there is a limit to your license, mistress; you are not to grow malignant or dangerous in any way; harmless and quiet lunatics may go at large; phrensied, mad women must be confined; harmless lunatics may be permitted to remain in the house with children, maniacs must be kept away from them. I am going to leave the country. I cannot think of leaving my children within reach of a woman, subject to visitations of irresistible impulses and terrible fascinations to deeds of blood—I must see her calm. You are calm now, I think, Hagar! quite cooled down, are you not? Say, Hagar?"

She was. The color had all faded away from her face, and she sat with haggard eyes fixed upon her clasped hands.

"Will you retire to rest now, as we leave so early in the morning?"

She arose and walked quietly to her room—he followed her after a while. She did not sleep all night, but lay quietly with her fingers pressed around her forehead. Before the first faint grey of morning dawned, Mrs. Collins rapped at their door to say that breakfast was ready. In half an hour from that the travellers had dressed, breakfasted, and stood grouped in the chilly hall, while the carriage was rolling up to the door. It stood still—the driver jumped down, opened the door, let down the steps, and remained waiting by its side.

"Hagar!" said Raymond Withers, turning pale, as he went to her and opened his arms.

"You last—you last!" she exclaimed, hastily kissing Rosalia, and turning, throwing herself into his arms.

"Come, Rosalia," said he, and drawing her arm through his own, and descending the stone stairs, he handed the pale and trembling girl into the carriage—she turned around to take a last view of her late home, and her eye fell upon *this picture*, a picture ever after distinctly present to her mind—the portico, with its slender white marble pillars visible in the grey of the morning, the front door partly open, revealing the lamplight in the passage-way, which struck across the stone floor and fell upon the haggard form and face of Hagar, as she stood there in her desolation, as she stood there leaning against the pillar, with her pale countenance struck out into ghastly relief by the dishevelled black hair falling down each side of her cheeks, and meeting the black boddice of her dress; but one glimpse Rosalia caught of that death-like face seen through the cold grey morning light, and against and intercepting the glancing and oblique rays of the gleaming lamp-light, but one glimpse as the carriage door closed upon her, yet that despairing look was never absent from her mind; it went with her on her journey, pursued her through life, and unto death. The carriage rolled away, and Hagar, turning, fell lifeless upon the threshold of her own door!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TEMPTED ANGEL.

"A spirit pure as hers
Is always pure, e'en when it errs,
As sunshine broken in the rill,
Though turned astray is sunshine still."
MOORE.

"You are weeping, Rosalia; why do you weep?" asked Raymond Withers, taking the seat by her side as soon as the carriage-door was closed upon them; "why do you weep so, dear Rosalia?"

"Alas!"

"And why 'alas,' Rose?"

"Hagar! Hagar!"

"And what about her?"

"She suffers so! she suffers so!"

"*Can* she suffer, Rosalia? *can* her fierce, high nature suffer *at all*, Rosalia?"

"Oh, can't you see it; can't you see it?"

"I can see she is angry and defiant; but for the rest, Rosalia, I never saw her shed a tear in my life; did you?"

"No."

"When *you* suffer you weep, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Always?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Very well then, Rose; when you see or hear that Hagar Withers *weeps*, believe that she sorrows, and not *till* then; you are weeping still; weep on my bosom, Rose!" and he drew her within his arms and laid her head against his breast.

The carriage stopped at the steamboat hotel upon the river's side, the boat had not yet arrived, though day was breaking fast, and the Eastern horizon already looking rosy. Raymond Withers took Rosalia into the parlor of the hotel, and having seated her, went out and dismissed the carriage, and returning to her, said,

"Remain here, dear Rosalia, until I step to the Post-office to see if there be any letter come

Digitized by Google

in last night's mail for any of us. I will return in five minutes."

He went out. The Post-office was near at hand; he reached it, and had just received a packet of letters and papers, when the sound of the approaching boat warned him to hurry on. Giving orders to a porter to carry their baggage on board, he hurried in, took Rosalia under his arm, hastened down to the beach, went on board, and the next moment they were carried rapidly down the river. Rosalia went into the ladies' cabin to put off her bonnet, and Raymond retired to read his letters. One letter fixed his attention; it was directed in a well known hand, and post-marked Norfolk; he walked up and down the guards of the boat buried in deep thought; at length he went to the door of the ladies' cabin, and calling the stewardess, told her to request Miss Aguilar to throw on her shawl and come up. Rosalia soon appeared at the head of the gangway. He offered her his arm and carried her up to the hurricane deck, that was at this hour vacant; they sat down on one of the rude benches (steamboats were not the floating palaces *then* that they are *now*), the sun was just rising, and lighting up into flashing splendor the gorgeous glories of the landscape, the river flowed like liquid gold between high banks of agate and of emerald; but it was not upon the magnificent river scenery that he looked.

"Rosalia, I have a letter here from Gusty May."

She changed color.

"His ship, or rather Captain Wilde's ship, has been in an engagement!"

"Oh, my God!"

"Hush—all your friends are safe."

"But, oh! *somebody's* friends are killed, or wounded!"

"Probably, my sweet girl; but they have been in an engagement and taken a prize—captured a slave-ship!"

"Oh, sweet Providence! Sophie exposed in a battle with a pirate!"

"But, my gentle girl, Sophie is *well*—but they have captured a prize, and Gusty May has been intrusted with the command of the vessel, and has brought it home—that is, to Norfolk!"

"To Norfolk! Gusty now in Norfolk!" exclaimed Rosalia, growing pale.

"Yes; and he writes that just as soon as he can obtain leave of absence, he is coming to see you"—

Rosalia trembled so much that he had to pass his arm around her waist to keep her in her seat.

"He says that he intends to call at Churchill's Point to see his mother on his way to see us"—

Rosalia seemed upon the verge of a swoon; he tightened his hold around her waist and went on speaking—

"He incloses this letter to you," and opening his own envelope, Raymond Withers took out a delicately folded letter and handed it to her; she received it with a trembling hand, broke the seal, glanced over the contents, the letter dropped from her stiffening fingers, her face grew white as death, her lips paled and fell apart, her eyes closed, and she sank into a swoon upon his bosom. He held her there without alarm or embarrassment; he stooped and picked up the letter she had let fall. He glanced over it—it was full of the youthful lover's exultant young life; one page was filled with glowing accounts of the battle, the victory, the prize; another with passionate protestations of love, fervent aspirations after a speedy reunion, &c., &c.; but upon the page upon which her eyes had been fixed when she swooned, was an expression of a hope that she would bestow her hand upon him during his present visit, assuring her that he bore with him letters to that effect from Captain Wilde and from Sophie. Rosalia opened her eyes just before he finished reading it. He raised her partly off his arm, and said,

"Well, Rosalia, I have read your letter or the greater part of it, do you care?"

"No—oh, no!"

"Well, Rosalia, you will probably meet your betrothed at the house of your intended mother-in-law."

"Oh, I had rather die! die!"

"Rosalia!"

"Oh, I had! I had a *thousand times* rather die than *meet* him! much less marry him!"

"Rosalia, there is one way to avoid it"

She looked at him in painful inquiry.

"Go with me to the Mediterranean!"

She started violently—again the blood rushed in torrents to her face, and passing, left it pale as marble. She did not attempt a reply in words—he continued,

"Captain Wilde is cruising in the Mediterranean. Sophie is either with him or residing with the family of some English or American Consul at some convenient sea-port. I can easily find out. I can very easily take you to them, to Captain and Mrs. Wilde, if you would prefer that to living with Mrs. Buncombe."

"Oh, yes, indeed I should so prefer it, greatly prefer it, but could it be done? is it right that it should be done? Will Mrs. Buncombe think it proper? and will Hagar approve of it? I wish this letter had come a day sooner, so that we might have consulted Hagar!"

Raymond Withers smiled a strange smile as he said,

"Whatever Mrs. Buncombe may say or think, I do not imagine that Hagar will be much surprised, or that Sophie Wilde will fail to give you a most enthusiastic welcome *when she sees you!*"

"If I thought it were possible, that is to say, convenient and agreeable all around, and perfectly right and proper in every respect, I—oh, I should be so happy to go! but though I do not know *why*, indeed, I am afraid it is not right."

"Would *I* suggest a measure to you, Rosalia, that is not right?" he asked, reproachfully.

"No, no—oh, certainly not—I did not mean *that*." He looked at her steadily.

"And yet I don't know! I don't know! Why do you look at me so? Why do you look at me so—growing beautiful and more beautiful every instant—growing bright and brighter until you seem, not a man, but a star, a sun flashing into my very *brain*, bewildering, making me dizzy! striking me blind with light! Ah! I am delirious again! Save me, Sophie! save me, mother!" and with a sharp cry, half laugh, half shriek, she fell into his arms. He stooped his head and whispered,

"You are mine, *mine*, MINE! Rosalia, I have manœuvred, intrigued, and waited for this hour. I have brought a high heart to the earth, trodden

Digitized by Google

a proud heart to the dust, crushed a strong heart to death in pursuit of this hour. You are mine, MINE, girl! I have bought you with a price, a high price! I have given up country, home, wife, and children; resigned integrity, pride, and ambition, and risked fair fame. Ah, God! I pay dearly for you, Rosalia!"

Three weeks from this day Rosalia sat alone in a private parlor in one of the principal hotels in Washington. It was mid-winter, yet the room was warm, and she reclined in a snowy white muslin robe upon a crimson sofa that was drawn up in front of the glowing coal fire; her head rested on her arm upon the end of the lounge. She was changed even in these three weeks. The round, elastic rosy cheeks, whose bloom was shaded faintly and fairly off towards the transparent and azure veined temples, and the snowy chin and brow were changed, all were changed—the beautiful faint rose glow that had overspread her lovely baby-face, had now withdrawn and collected itself in one burning fever spot in either cheek, leaving her brow and temples pallid; and the liquid and floating light of her soft blue eyes, had now concentrated in one intense fiery spark in the centre of either pupil. Her attitude was still as death, yet an air of suppressed excitement was visible in every feature. The door opened, and she started up into a sitting position, as Raymond Withers entered; *he* had changed *back again*, having regained all his old accustomed ease and eloquence; he wheeled a large easy chair to the fire and sank down among its cushions.

"Rosalia, we leave Washington in the Norfolk boat at six o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Have you heard from Hagar?" asked she, faintly.

"No, not a word—she is sulking, never mind her, Rose," replied he, an expression of pain traversing his countenance, nevertheless. "*Why* recall her?"

"I do not—she is ever, ever, *ever* before me! her pale face! oh! pale like that of a victim strained upon the rack! I believe Hagar is dead and haunts me! Oh, let me go away, Raymond! let me leave you!" and her face suddenly grew sharp and white in anguish. He looked at her uneasily.

"Rose!"

She raised her eyes to his beautiful and resplendent countenance, and her own softened. He went and sat down by her side, and caressing her gently, said,

"Rose, dear, I am no kidnapper, no pirate. I will take with me no unwilling companion. Speak, Rose, you shall have your will in this. Listen, dear, the Arrow steamboat in which we embark to-morrow morning, the boat that is to take me to Norfolk where the brig Argus awaits to convey me across the Atlantic to my destination on the Mediterranean—that boat you will recollect passes immediately by Churchill Point—how easy, Rose, to put you ashore there, where you are already expected—where Mrs. Buncombe already looks for you with impatience."

Rosalia shook as with an ague fit.

"Where your betrothed, who has, no doubt, already reached there on his way to the Rialto, and who, having heard of your hourly expected arrival, awaits you with all a lover's ardor, will meet you with all a lover's enthusiasm—come, what do you say, Rose? come, Rose, come? I have a letter to write in which I must be guided by your decision! Come, Rose! come! Shall I put you on shore at Churchill Point?"

"*Now!*" she exclaimed, in a tone of bitterest anguish. "*Now!*"

"Well, then go back to the Rialto, return to Hagar."

"To Hagar!" she gasped, as a sharp spasm convulsed her features. "To Hagar! great God! death, *death* rather."

He waited until her fearful excitement subsided, and then, while he gently and softly caressed and soothed her into quietude, he murmured in a low, sedative tone,

"I know it all, dear—I know how utterly impossible it is for you to go to either. I only set the plans before you, that you might *feel* the impossibility as deeply as I knew the impracticability of either project—and now you *do* feel it! and now, my gentle dove, be quiet—nestle sweetly in the only bosom open to you in the whole world;" and he drew her within his arms and kissed away her tears. Presently, arising, he said, "Now I must leave you, to write a letter, love."

And going to his chamber he sat down and penned a short missive to Hagar. It was as follows:—

INDIAN QUEEN HOTEL,
Washington City, Jan. 22, 182-.

Dearest Hagar, mine only one—

Yes, mine *only* Hagar—there is but one Hagar, can be but one Hagar in the world—after all, I shall be obliged to disappoint you and myself cruelly, by leaving the country without being able to see you first. The truth is this—for the last three weeks I have been dancing daily attendance between the President's mansion and the State Department, in daily expectation of receiving my credentials—they were at last placed in my hands only four days ago—and I am to go out in the Argus, that sails from Norfolk within a week: so you see, love, the utter impossibility of our meeting again before my departure—best so, perhaps—I do not like parting scenes. I wrote to you that your cousin, Miss Aguilar, had decided to embrace the opportunity offered by my escort, to go out and rejoin her friends, Captain and Mrs. Wilde. Now, Hagar, do not take any absurd fancies about this, I do implore you. I have taken the greatest care of the *proprieties*, love, I assure you. The day after we arrived in this city, I happened to meet Lieutenant Graves, who was formerly on the store-ship Rainbow with Captain Wilde—we met him there, you will recollect—well, now he is stationed at the Navy Yard in this city, where he has a comfortable private residence, with his wife; he invited me to his house, knowing that his wife had been an almost daily companion of Mrs. Wilde and Miss Aguilar while they were in Boston harbor; I mentioned the presence of Rosalia in this city, and her intention of going out to the Mediterranean under my protection, to rejoin her friends. As I expected, the next day brought Mrs. Graves to our hotel to see Miss Aguilar, whom she invited home with her to spend the weeks of her sojourn in this city; nothing could have been more proper, more conventional, more completely *comme-il-faut* than this arrangement; nothing could have been more *fortunate*, in fact. I bade Rosalia accept the courtesy, which she did at once, and Mrs. Graves carried Miss Aguilar home, within the walls of the Navy Yard, where she has remained up to this day. This evening Lieutenant Graves brought her back to our hotel, because we leave at a very early hour tomorrow morning. Rosalia is the bearer of many letters and presents from Mrs. Graves to Mrs. Wilde. All right. Now, Hagar, again—indulge no absurd fancies about this! Do not make me savage! you have not answered any of my letters—are you putting on airs, mistress? Well, you will get out of them. I am exasperated into writing sharply to you, by knowing instinctively what you will think, how you will feel, perhaps what you will *say*; but hold there, Hagar. Do not make me a

Digitized by Google

by-word, by giving language to your suspicions. Whatever may be the broodings of your insanity, do not let it break forth in ravings that will subject us to calumny. You know my fastidiousness upon this point—please remember it, Hagar; and remember, *too*, that your eccentricities and wildness leave your sanity *questionable* to some minds; that your jealousies will be the *ravings of madness, and that mad women are not to be trusted at large, or with the care of children!* So, for your own sake, Hagar—for the sake of all you hold most dear, be reasonable, cautious, and calm. It distresses me to write to you so, love, just upon the eve of my departure, but you are *so* crazy—and I want you to try and retain the possession of your senses. Rouse yourself, love! go into society, cultivate and indulge all your favorite tastes; repurchase your little Arabian, and be again the gay, glad Hagar you were at the Heath; cultivate your music, give concerts, in which you shall be the prima donna—collect a congenial circle around you—purchase all your favorite books, and everything that suits your fancy—exhaust the little fund I have in bank, and let me know when it is gone. When you are weary of everything else, go and visit Mrs. Buncombe, at Churchill Point. Come, love, you have enough to occupy you during my absence. Take care of the babies Rosalia sends her love to you—you know her aversion to writing, or any other work that requires mental application, and will therefore excuse her. Do *you* write to me immediately—direct your letters to Port Mahon, and send them through the State Department. Why do you *not* write to me?"

In an hour from the moment of closing and mailing his letter, Raymond Withers placed Rosalia in a hack, drove to the steamboat-wharf, and embarked upon the Arrow, which left for Norfolk the next morning at six.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DESOLATED.

"Thou knowest well what once I was to thee;
One who for love of one I loved—*for thee!*—
Would have done, or borne the sins of all the world;
Who did thy bidding at thy lightest look;
And had it been to have snatched an angel's crown
Off her bright brow as she sat singing, throned,
I would have cut these heart-stringe that tie down
My soul, and let it sail to Heaven to do it—
'Spite of the thunder and the sacrilege,
And laid it at thy feet. I loved thee, lady!
I am one whose love is greater than the world's,
And might have vied with God's; a boundless ring,
All pressing on one point—that point, thy heart.
——————————But, for the future,
I will as soon attempt to entice a star
To perch upon my finger, or the wind
To follow me like a dog, as think to keep
A woman's heart again."

FESTUS

"WELL, just once more, mother!"

"But this is expensive and inconvenient, please to remember, Mr. Gusty, and we are not rich."

"Not rich—oh! mother, I wish you would take something from *me*—which you never will."

"No, Gusty, I had rather be extravagant with my own funds than with yours. I wish you to accumulate property, Gusty—that is to say only *this*—spend as little of your limited income as possible, lay by the balance until you get enough to purchase a piece of land and build a house. I do think that every young man should do that—I mean every young man with a fixed salary—of course men engaged in commerce may use their money to better advantage by investing it in trade. But, oh, Gusty, I do wish to see you have a house of your own so much; a home that you can improve and beautify to your own taste; and I do wish to see your Rosalia presiding over it. Come and kiss me, dear Gusty! dear fellow, don't you think that I sympathize with your hopes?"

Gusty laughingly sprang to his mother, and catching her around the neck, kissed her uproariously, saying—

"*Ah, mais, maman maligne,* you will not make a feast for Rose, this evening!"

"Oh! but, Gusty, see here! we have been making feasts every evening for a week past, and she has not come to eat them—and may not come this evening—and, Gusty, besides, if I take this little bride of yours here, and wish to keep her for four or five years, to save some hundred dollars of your salary annually, I must not make her too expensive to Buncombe. Dear Buncombe, he is so wise! so good! and so unobtrusive in his wisdom and goodness—I have already too much overlooked his interests and comfort in my economies and sacrifices for you and Rosalia—I must"—

Up sprang Gusty, exclaiming—

"If I thought that, mother, my honor"—

"Is *safe* in your mother's keeping, Gusty, believe that."

"But, mother!"

"Come, Gusty, nonsense—no high points of honor with the woman that brought you into the world, or with her husband either—Buncombe suffers many privations that you know nothing of, and could not sympathize with, if you did know—he wants certain books, scientific and mathematical instruments, &c., that he can never purchase, because he spills his money all over the parish; lavishing his slender means upon the poor, instead of influencing the rich to relieve them from their ample store—for Buncombe can give, but he cannot beg, even for others—that requires a high moral heroism in a sensitive heart like his. I have had to pick his pockets before he goes out, every day, else they would come home empty. He never economizes; never thinks of expense—not he—and when Rosalia is seated by our fireside, he will never think whether she costs us a hundred cents or a hundred dollars a year—the blessed soul!—nonsense, Gusty," said she, with tears in her eyes, "you will break my heart if you get upon your dignity with Buncombe."

"Getting upon my impertinence, it would be, mother," said Gusty, seriously, "only—well!—yes, I am sure, mother, I can leave it all to you—must do it, in fact—for until my marriage, I have no right to object, and after my marriage, there is no place where I would leave Rosalia but here with you; and if you will not receive any compensation, it cannot be helped for the present."

"You must appreciate Mr. Buncombe, Gusty!"

"Oh! I *do*, mother, I *do!* I think he is an admirable—Crichton, or Christian—which is it, mother?—I do, indeed—I really do—your appreciation and affection endears him, mother! But now, mother, indeed it is almost four o'clock, and there is no certainty about these evening boats—they pass any time between five and ten—come, mother, tell Kitty to make a nice little supper, and not to forget the rice cakes, with honey sauce, that Rose likes, and

Digitized by Google

then, mother, get your shawl and muff, and *do* come along with me to the cliff, to watch for the boat—come, mother, oh, *do* come!"

Emily arose with a smile and a sigh.

"Mothers with marriageable daughters make heavy complaints—the egotists!—but a mother with a marriageable son—a great loblolly boy, in love, who is always melting over her!—has not *she* a trial? As for those rice cakes, Mr. Gusty, they are very well once in a long time, but we have had them prepared every week for your Rosalia, who has not appeared to partake of them; and we have had to eat them all up ourselves, to keep them from being wasted, and we are all getting the dyspepsia, and I am losing my complexion from indigestion, and whatever you may think, I assure you, Master Gusty, that I value the beauty of my complexion for the sake of my good man, quite as much, and perhaps more than your Rosalia values hers, for the sake of you—and as for this trip to the beach, Master Gusty, every afternoon, through the cold, and over the snow, it does not help to counteract the ill effects of the cakes quite as much as I could wish, because, Master Gusty, I have to stand upon the wet beach, in the current of wind too long, Master Gusty—and so, Master Gusty, you will please to be a trifle more reasonable in your love, if love and reason ever can coalesce in you—but, however, Master Gusty, I will once more take cakes and cold for your sake," and going out into the kitchen, she gave the necessary orders, and returned enveloped in a large hood, shawl, and muff. Gusty buttoned up his great coat, and they set out. The walk from Grove Cottage to the promontory was rather long. The afternoon was clear, bright, and cold, and the snow, slightly crusted, crackled under their feet as they pursued their way towards the cliff. They reached its summit, and stood upon the extreme point of the peak. Emily took out her watch to note the time, gaily grumbling at its waste, while her son adjusted his pocket-telescope, and took sight up the river.

"It is five o'clock, Gusty, and nearly dark besides, or would be, if it were not for the full moon, helping the twilight."

"It is coming, mother—the boat is coming!" exclaimed Gusty, still keeping his telescope pointed up the river. "It is the Arrow, mother, I can see the name."

The boat bore down rapidly. They turned to descend the steep and slippery sides of the cliff, and stood upon the frozen beach as the boat flew swiftly on. His heart paused as it neared—stood still as it passed. Let *me* pause here. Reader, notice this party on the cold beach, and now cast a magician's glance into the cabin of the boat that is passing. In a small state room opening from that cabin, upon the floor by the side of the berth, kneels Rosalia Aguilar, with her face pressed down upon the pillow, with the ends of the pillow held up against her head, to shut out every sight and sound of the shore and home she is passing, which is yet distinctly and fearfully present to her mind's eye and ear. She sees the village, the dividing river, the heath, with its forest in the background; the promontory, the old Hall, with its broken garden wall and poplar trees; lastly, the beach, and the party on the beach. Emily and Gusty—she knows, she feels, that they are there waiting her—she knows, she feels, that they were there yesterday, and that they will be there to-morrow. She knows, she feels, how they will both wait and wonder—how one will sicken and suffer with "hope deferred"—and ah! reverting to another home upon the banks of a Northern river,—another desolated home, desolated by herself, she sees *another* bleeding heart and burning brain, as she presses the pillow closer about her ears to shut out sights and sounds that her spirit-eyes and ears must see and hear—how long? Rosalia was not one to enjoy a single hour's impunity in singing—yet she went on.

Behold the insanity of passion that, through all the accumulating anguish of remorse, perseveres in sin!

The boat has passed.

"Again, mother!" exclaimed Gusty, with a look of deep disappointment.

"Yes, and again many times, perhaps, my dear boy! Something detains her; perhaps we shall hear by to-night's mail," and they turned to leave the cliff.

Gusty saw his mother home, and, without stopping to take supper, hurried off to Churchill Point, to await the arrival of the evening's mail. He returned in two hours—there was no letter. The next night, and the next, and every night for a week longer, Emily and her son watched for Rosalia in vain. The mail came in twice a week, and every mail-day Gusty was waiting a letter at the post-office, and Emily waiting him at home. At last, one night, Gusty hurried in with a letter. Throwing it in his mother's lap, he exclaimed,

"It is for *you;* open it quick, mother, do; there is something odd about it; a letter addressed in Raymond Withers's hand, and postmarked Norfolk. What can it mean? Do read it, mother!"

Emily glanced her eyes over it, while Gusty stood pawing and champing in his impatience. It was merely a formal announcement from Raymond Withers of the change in Miss Aguilar's plans; of her determination to go out under his protection and rejoin Captain Wilde and Sophie, &c., &c. Emily handed him the letter in silence, and watched him as he read it. Fearful was the picture of passion presented by Gusty! his bosom heaved in fierce convulsions—the blood rushed to his head, his face grew scarlet, the veins on his temples and forehead swelled like cords, his teeth ground together, his eyes glared and flashed. Crushing the letter in his hand, he raised it above his head, threw it hard upon the floor, set his foot upon the paper as though he would grind it to powder, and strode up and down the room shaking his clenched fist, gnashing his teeth, and exclaiming, as he foamed at the mouth,

"Villain! wretch! dastard! God! oh, God! that months, that days, that even *minutes* should pass before my heel is on his neck! my sword's point in his heart!"

Amazed, alarmed at his terrible excitement, Emily followed him up and down the room.

"Gusty! dear Gusty! in the name of Heaven sit down—be calm!"

But, foaming and shaking, Gusty did not heed, or even hear her.

Digitized by Google

"If I had him here! If I had him here, with my foot upon his chest, my hands around his throat—he would be but as a reed in my grasp—a fox's cub in a lion's claws! Oh! if I had him here beneath my feet! *Oh!* if I had him here! *Oh!* if I could get at him now! *Why* can I not clear the distance between us at a bound!—spring upon him! bear him down to the ground!—God! oh, God! I shall dash my desperate brains out before I can get at him!"

Emily had sunk pale and trembling into her chair, quite overwhelmed by his frightful passion, while, like a man in a fit of hydrophobia, like a maniac in the height of his phrensy, like a wild beast maddened in his cage, he raved, and shook, and foamed!

Passions, like tempests, by their own fury, soon exhaust themselves. Fits of passion, in some natures, spend their last fury in tears as the storm passes off in rain. He raged until the exasperating image of Raymond Withers was replaced by the subduing form of Rosalia, and anger was drowned in sorrow for the time. He dropped heavily upon the sofa, and burying his face in its large cushions, sobbed—yes, *sobbed*—

"Rosalia! Oh, *Rose, Rose!*"

Emily, much wondering at, and alarmed by, the great degree of emotion raised by a seemingly insufficient cause, arose, and tottering, came and sat beside him. He remained unconscious of her presence. She sat there half an hour, waiting for him to look up, before he seemed to observe her; at length he turned over, and revealed a face pale and ghastly, as by a recent fit of illness. He looked up, with an appeal for sympathy straining through his blood-shot eyes, piercing up to the gentle face of his mother.

"In the name of Heaven, now, Gusty, what *does* all this mean?" she inquired, anxiously.

"*Mean*, mother! Ah, Heaven! *yes*, what does it mean!"

"Surely, Gusty, it is extravagant to manifest all this frightful passion at this disappointment. I own that it was rather unkind in Rosalia to go off to Sophie when we were expecting her, and that it was thoughtless in Raymond to omit writing until the last hour, very thoughtless; but"—

"Thought*less!* the calculating, forecasting demon! it was just the contrary—it was thought*ful* of him!"

"What do you mean, Gusty?"

Could he reveal to her the fearful light that had broken upon *his* mind? the terrible truth that had overwhelmed him? Oh, no! at least not now; he remained silent, and she continued to misunderstand him. She went on to say—

"Your disappointment blinds you—makes you unjust, Gusty; it was thoughtlessness, or much occupation, that prevented Raymond Withers from writing, to give you an opportunity of seeing Rosalia before their departure; and for the rest, if you can only get over the present disappointment, this arrangement will be better for your *pleasure*, whatever it may be for your purse; for look you, Gusty: suppose Rose had really come, as she promised, and you had married her, and, at the expiration of your leave of absence, left her here, as arranged; you would have spent only a fortnight with her, and then been separated from her for two or three years. Now, by this new plan, you are for the present disappointed, but then you will soon go out, meet her and be near her all the time. Nonsense, dear Gusty! You have nothing really to regret."

And so, in her happy blindness, she continued to talk to the despairing boy before her; and so, uninterruptedly, he let her talk on, while he lay there with his hands clasped upon his corrugated brow. At last, aroused by the laughing and crowing of a wakening baby in the next room, she went and brought her little girl out and sat down with her by Gusty's side, thinking the glee of the babe, of whom he was very fond, would enliven him. On the contrary he became very much agitated. Presently he said—

"Mother, dear, if it will not be too much inconvenience, put a shirt or two, and a pair of socks, &c., into my valise; I'm off by the morning's boat for the North."

"Why, Gusty!"

"Dear mother, *yes!*—I must see Hagar!"

"Why must you?"

"I *want* to see her, mother—*must* see her! I am *anxious* about her!"

"Anxious about her?"

"Yes, *very* anxious!"

"And why are you so?"

Without replying, Gusty arose and walked the floor with his arms folded and his chin bowed upon his breast.

"What makes you so anxious to see Hagar, Gusty?"

He paused, and looked perplexed for a few minutes, then suddenly replied—

"Is it not natural that I should wish to see Hagar after so long an absence?"

"But it is not so long an absence, and your resolution is so sudden."

"Well, besides, mother, finding now that it is useless to try to see Rosalia—for that was a ship-letter dated at Hampton Roads, and brought in by the pilot, you know—I wish to dissipate my chagrin, mother; is not that natural?"

"Oh, yes! Well, I suppose you do," said Emily.

The next morning, early, Gusty May set out for the Rialto.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHANGES.

"When sorrows come,
They come not single spies but in battalions."
SHAKSPEARE.

"An eagle with a broken wing,
A harp with many a broken string."
SYBIL'S LEAVES.

FROM Lieutenant Augustus May to Mrs. Emily Buncombe.

"THE RIALTO, February 21st, 182–.

"DEAREST MOTHER:—Come to Hagar. Yes, come. Whatever you may have in hand, put it down, pack up, and come to Hagar. You will do so when I have told you all I have to tell you—alas! the worst you will not know until you reach this place. I arrived at —— on the 15th of the current month, early in the morning, and proceeded at once to The Rialto, reached the house at about eleven o'clock was ushered into the drawing-

Digitized by Google

room, and inquired after the health of the family. I was told by the servant who admitted me, that Mrs. Withers had been extremely ill for the last six weeks, but that she was now better, and able to leave her room. I sent up to know if she could receive me—the man returning told me that Mrs. Withers would be down in a few minutes. Well, mother! I waited perhaps half an hour, at the end of which time the door opened, and a figure—as Heaven hears me, mother, I did not recognise it for Hagar! the once elegant and brilliant Hagar! a figure shrouded in a black wrapper, with the hair all pushed back under a sharp cornered muslin cap, that marked the outline of a countenance never to be forgotten!—the pallid forehead was doubled in a dark fold between the eye-brows, and above eyes strained out into such startling and piercing brightness, that I shuddered and dropped my gaze before them! she came on slowly, trembling, tottering, and sank into a chair, in such utter feebleness; she attempted to speak, to greet me, but the words died on her white lips. To see Hagar thus! our beautiful, resplendent Hagar! our strong, proud, exultant Hagar! Mother, I have seen death in all its phases, the soldier struck down in battle, the criminal swung off from the yard-arm, the old man give up the ghost in his bed, and the infant fall into its last sleep in its mother's arms, yet I never realized DEATH; never! until I saw this high soul brought low, this fiery soul quenched, this eagle of the sun lying wounded on the earth, weltering in blood and dust. My proud sister Hagar! my high souled Hagar! would that I had suffered alone! would that I could have died to have saved her! You do not comprehend her grief, or my deep sympathy, mother—alas! you will understand it but too well by-and-bye. Oh! well, I went to her, sat beside her, took her hand—I felt that I was her brother—I pitied her, loved her, would have soothed her, caressed her as when she was a little girl; but with a haggard look and an adjuring gesture she repelled me, as she murmured, in a hollow, church-yard voice, 'I have been ill—ill.' 'I know it, dearest Hagar; dearest sister, I know it all—everything—I am a fellow sufferer, but no matter for that; what is my grief to your great sorrow! Hagar, I am your friend—your brother for life and to death! I will do anything you wish me to do—I am at your command—I will even throw up my commission and come and live near you, if, by doing so, I can be of any use to you. Yes, Hagar, I will do that, even if I have to mend clocks for a living.' She looked at me and faltered a reply; but, oh! the words fell from her ashen lips unnatural and unintelligible, like those from an automaton, and few as they were, they seemed to have exhausted the small remnant of her strength, for she sank back in her chair in a swoon. I flew to the bell and rung it violently, and Mrs. Collins came in—seeing the state of Hagar, she immediately summoned a female domestic, and bore her back to her chamber. I followed them up stairs. I could not, would not stay away. I followed them into her room—saw them lay her upon her bed—waited until they had recovered her—saw her open her eyes, and then, and not till then, I withdrew and left her to repose. She was worse the next morning—the agitation occasioned by our interview had caused a relapse—and, mother, that very next day, the day succeeding my arrival, while she lay at the point of death, *an execution* was brought into the house, and everything swept off! all that splendid furniture, together with the valuable library, and rare collections of pictures, statuary, and virtu accumulated by the late General Raymond—all went! I repurchased the furniture of her suite of private apartments; but she shall not know that; she will naturally think, and I shall permit her to think, that they were spared by creditors—and, mother, if you come on here, take care that you do not undeceive her. It seems that for the last two years, Mr. Raymond Withers—curse him! has been living far above his income, and that as soon as his creditors knew him to have left the country, they came down upon his property. Hagar does not yet know the new misfortune that has fallen upon her, as she was lying insensible when the sheriff's officer took the inventory of her bed-chamber, and I took the precaution that none of its furniture should be disturbed. Mother, come quickly to Hagar. The servants are all leaving the house, because there is no money to pay them their wages. I have exceeded my furlough. I do not know what will be the consequence, and cannot help it. I am cited to appear before a court martial—cannot do it, of course. The devil himself would not leave Hagar in her present situation. Thank God! I have got a few thousand dollars in bank, and that will keep the wolf from Hagar's door for some years to come, any how! Oh, mother! do come quickly. Hagar is still confined to her bed—she wants a lady with her—a friend with her. Mrs Collins, the housekeeper, and Barnes, the nurse, leave at the first of March; that is close at hand, so do not delay. Your affectionate son,

"AUGUSTUS W. MAY."

From Mrs. Buncombe to Lieutenant May.

"GROVE COTTAGE, March 1st, 182-.

"You are mad, unlucky boy! I have just this moment got your letter—and I am exactly horrified to death at its contents. Gusty! is this the way in which you repay all my care of you? Return immediately to your post, as you value my blessing. Do you not know, wretched boy, that you run the risk of having your commission taken from you? Do you not know, oh! dolt of a child, that you will be scandalized to death, if you remain a day where you are? and all the servants leaving the house, too! Oh, Heavens, Gusty! am *I* who never risked the chance of a breath of calumny, am *I* now to suffer through the imprudence of my son? What would your blessed father say if he were here to know of this? If you have not already left the house, leave it immediately on the receipt of this letter. I *command* you, Gusty! return to your post, and write me that you have done so, as you value my blessing, Gusty! Nay, dear Gusty, I withdraw the command; I have no right to make it to a grown up man—and, I *entreat*, Gusty, that you will return immediately to your post, as you value my peace, Gusty.

"As to my coming to Hagar, it is not possible just now; Buncombe has the rheumatism, and baby is cutting her eye-teeth; besides which, Kitty has scalded her hand so badly as to be nearly useless—so that you see I am the sole dependence of the family.

"As for Hagar's anguish, it is as inexplicable as your past fury was. I can well imagine her regret at parting with her husband, but as for the rest, it is all mystery, and you know it has been said by them of old time, that where there is mystery it is fair to presume guilt, or at least some grave error. This unhappy Hagar had ever possessed the unenviable gift of drawing down upon her head the ban of society—but she must not pull others down with her. It is all inexplicable to me—I do not understand it in the least; but I fear all is not right. Write to me immediately, Gusty, and tell me that you are off. I am so uneasy that I have no appetite for my dinner.

"Your anxious and affectionate mother,

"EMILY BUNCOMBE."

Mr. May to Mrs. Buncombe.

"THE RIALTO, March 7th, 182-.

"DEAR MOTHER:—I received your letter to-day. I am here yet, you see. In all things that are right I will obey you always, if I get as big as Goliah and old as Methuselah. But! when I forsake Hagar in her utmost need, may God forsake me then and for ever Amen—so be it. Selah. Hagar is still too ill to leave her room; still ignorant of the execution. Collins, Barnes, and the rest have left the house—*all* have left except a maid-of-all-work, whose wages I have engaged to pay. A second execution at the suit of another creditor has been levied, and a second time I have had to redeem from confiscation, the furniture of her rooms As soon as Hagar is able to travel, I must get her away from this; I cannot stay here for ever, paying that infernal fellow's debts, as I am now obliged to do, to keep poor Hagar from being shocked to death.

"Well, mother! it is as you feared—I am cashiered! dismissed the service! Well, what of it? The service has lost more than I have, by the arrangement! The service has lost a gallant officer! a noble fellow! a whole hearted man! *I* say it! Moreover, they cannot cashier my bones and muscles, my heart and brain, my faith, hope, and energy! Besides, the blow Rosalia dealt me, has stunned, numbed me into a sort of insensibility to all wounds inflicted upon myself. I am vulnerable now only through Hagar.

"Well, I am cashiered! Grieve for the service, mother! not for me. Your affectionate son,

"AUGUSTUS W. MAY."

Mr. May to Mrs. Buncombe.

"THE RIALTO, March 14th.

"DEAR MOTHER:—I wrote to you a week ago, but I

Digitized by Google

cannot await your answer, as I am in great haste. In naming this homestead 'The Rialto,' I presume they merely had an allusion to its locality above the river—but it is appropriate in its sadder association, too This is, indeed, a 'bridge of sighs.' The house was sold today for taxes. Poor Hagar is up at last—but oh! such a wreck; her beautiful hair that I thought concealed under her cap, has been all cut off. She bears her new trials better than I expected. Like me, her one great sorrow has rendered her insensible to minor griefs. She wishes to return to her own home, Heath Hall. It is upon this matter that I write to you. Do, mother, have it made comfortable for her reception. She has sold all her own jewels to defray the expenses of her journey. There is a balance to the credit of Raymond Withers—perdition catch his soul!—at the bank, but Hagar will not draw it. Prepare to receive the stricken one kindly, mother, I entreat you, as you value my peace, mother! Your affectionate son,

"A. W. MAY."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE RETURN.

"Oh! if indeed to *part*
With the soul's loved ones be a bitter thing,
When we go forth in buoyancy of heart,
And bearing all the glories of our spring,
Is it less so to *meet*
When these are withered? Who shall call it sweet?"
HEMANS.

THE 20th of March, 182–, was a day to be remembered for the terrible storm of wind, snow, and hail that visited the earth, and raged through these latitudes all that tremendous day and night!

It was in the height of this furious tempest, that a packet might *not* have been seen as it toiled against wind and tide, on its way down Chesapeake Bay,—might *not* have been seen, for it was as difficult to *see* through the dense fall of snow, as it was to *breathe* against the driving, piercing sleet that struck into every pore of the skin and thorax like millions of needle points.

Could you have discerned that packet-boat through the shrouds of falling snow, you would have looked upon a bark apparently carved in ice. The deck was blocked up with drifting snow, freezing as it fell, and still increasing against all the efforts of the crew. The masts struck up like shafts of ice, between which the crossing ropes formed a crystal lattice-work. The sails were stiff, stark, and glittering with sleet. And all—ropes, masts, and sails, grew thicker every instant,—losing their distinctness of form as the snow fell fast, congealing on them, until the bark seemed the nucleus of an avalanche, or the skeleton upon which the body of an iceberg was being formed.

The cabin of that little packet was small, deep, and dark, and lighted even in the day by a tiny lamp nailed against the wall. In this low cabin, by the side of the narrow coffin-like berth, sat a pale and ghastly little woman, clothed in a black dress and simple cap, whom you would never recognise to be Hagar. Upon the berth lay two sleeping infants, of nearly twelve months old. She leans heavily with both elbows upon the side of the berth, and supports her drooping head upon her hands. She has sat thus for hours, while the tempest has raged above and around her. She will probably sit there for hours longer unless the children wake, or some one enters to rouse her from her dreamy trance. She does not hear the howling wind, though it beats among the ice-bound and rattling sails and ropes, a thundering accompaniment to its fierce song. She does not see the snow, though it has nearly blocked up the narrow gangway leading down into her cabin. She does not feel the penetrating and piercing cold, though her hands are purple, stiff, and numb. Towards the evening, Gusty May entered the cabin.

"How are you now, Hagar, and how are the children?" inquired he, coming up to her side.

She did not seem to see or hear him. He repeated his question earnestly. She raised her pallid brow and straining glance, and answered, mechanically,—

"Well—we are well."

"Do the children fatigue you, Hagar? You look so weary; why do you not call me to help to take care of them when they tire you?"

"They never tire me," replied Hagar.

"Have they brought you any dinner, Hagar? I really do not believe they have. No!—and your fire has been suffered to go out, while I have been on deck all day helping to work the vessel or clear the deck. What a thing it is to see a poor, dear sick girl, with two children, on the water in such a scuttled tub as this bark, without even a female attendant!"

So lamenting, Gusty bustled about, replenished the fire, and going to a locker, brought out a glass of cordial and a cracker, which he compelled her to swallow, saying,

"It is a 'round, unvarnished' truth that, if I were not here to kindle your fire and to hold a morsel to your lips, you would starve to death, Hagar! I wonder how long this dreadful apathy is going to last!"

Then setting away the glass and plate, he went to shovelling away the snow from the gangway.

"Passengers for Heath Hall!" sang out a voice from above.

Gusty dropped the shovel and rushed up on deck. Hagar, her children, and himself, were certainly the only passengers for Heath Hall. After an absence of five minutes he returned.

"Hagar! rouse yourself, now, dear Hagar, and answer me; we are nearly opposite to *Heath Hall!*"

The sound of that name was sufficient to arouse her.

"Speak on, Gusty, I am neither dead, deaf, asleep, nor crazy, Gusty, though I must often seem to you to be one or the other. Well, what were you saying about Heath Hall?"

"We are nearly opposite to the promontory, Hagar, and we must now go ashore, or keep on down the bay to the Capes."

"Oh, go on shore by all means! What suggested the other alternative?"

"What? Poor thing, you know nothing! It is a frightful night to go on shore, Hagar. We stand out a mile from the land, and cannot even see the shore through thick and driving hail and sleet. Then, the beach must be covered knee-deep with snow, and the ascent to the promontory nearly impracticable from ice—that is to say, for *you*, Hagar."

"For *me*—you forget, Gusty, overwhelmed, as you see me, by mental troubles, you know that I am nearly invincible before physical ills

Digitized by Google

and obstacles. I can see my way through the darkest night that ever shrouded earth—keep my footing firm in the ascent of the most slippery and dangerous precipice in the world. Thank God! my physical powers are not destroyed yet."

"You are feeling better—your spirits are rising, Hagar."

"Oh, they are, they are, to be under the shadow of my old Hall again! I think that I shall no sooner step upon my native heath, than I shall feel life and spirits strike up through my feet, filling my whole frame with strength and power."

"Passengers for Heath Hall, get ready," yelled a voice from the deck.

"Come, Hagar, get the children and yourself ready quickly, while I see the trunks lowered to the skiff."

"But, oh! these children! these children! after all, perhaps we had better stay here, than expose *them* to the storm."

"They shall not suffer from exposure to the storm; *I* will carry the babies, and take care of that—so if you think that you can get along and keep your footing ascending the cliff, we had better go ashore notwithstanding all I have said; for it threatens to be a horrible night, and God Almighty only knows what may be the fate of the packet before day."

Hagar said no more, and Gusty left the cabin. Hagar wrapped her children up in their little warm light blankets and long cloaks, and then put on her own close travelling dress, and had scarcely completed her preparations when Gusty came down again, and assisted her with the children by taking charge of one while she insisted on keeping the other on deck. And what a deck it was! She toiled up the gangway knee-deep in snow, while the sharp and driving sleet cut into her face, nearly blinding and smothering her; it was almost impossible to see a foot in advance; in an instant her whole dress was covered white and stiff with snow, that froze as it fell. It was only her warm breath that kept mouth and nostrils free for breathing, and saved her from a freezing suffocation. Gusty kept hold of one hand; drawing her through the snow-drifts beneath, and the falling avalanche of sleet around, he guided her to the edge of the vessel, lowered the two children half smothered in their wrappings, to the oarsmen in the skiff, handed Hagar down, and descended after her; while the sleet whirling thick around them threatened to convert the little boat with its freight into a huge snowball. The two oarsmen pulled swiftly through the white tempest for the shore—providentially wind and tide were in their favor; they soon reached the beach—but, oh! what a howling wilderness of a shore it was upon this tremendous night! On their left the promontory, like some huge ice-peak of the arctic regions, loomed horribly through storm and darkness; while towards the right the white shore stretched away in a dim horizontal line—a half-guessed vague terror like the shores of the frozen ocean seen through the night. Using their oars as poles they pushed the boat through the rushing water and crusted ice, and landed it upon the beach immediately under the promontory. Pausing a moment to gather breath after their great exertions, the two men took each of them a child, and Gusty drew Hagar's frost-crusted arm within his own, and they stepped from the boat, and struggled on through the deep snow and against the driving storm to the little fishing-house against the side of the promontory. The wind and sleet were in their face, blowing from behind the other side of the promontory. As they toiled on towards it they found the snow less and less deep, until coming under its cover they trod upon bare though frozen ground, and reaching the fishing-house found it perfectly dry, as the ground was for many yards around it; a better protected place than was the cabin of the ship they had left. Taking away the prop that fastened the door, they entered. The men stood holding the children. Hagar dropped upon an upturned fishing-tub; while Gusty, taking a small wax candle and tinder-box from the pocket of his great coat, struck a light, and holding it about surveyed the premises, as the men, giving the children to Hagar, returned to the boat to fetch the trunks. It was a small but tight and well-finished, weather-proof little place, built against the side of the promontory of rocks cut from its bosom; the walls were plastered, the floor paved, and an ample fire-place on the right of the entrance, faced a large window on the left. It had been built as a place of deposit for fishing-tackle, and as a kitchen for dressing the freshly caught fish, crabs, and oysters, when the Churchills varied their hospitality by an improvised fish-feast upon the beach.

Gusty surveyed the capabilities of the place, poked the candle and his nose into holes and corners, among broken fishing-rods, old flag-baskets, staves of fallen down tubs, footless pots, and topless kettles, &c., and then sticking the candle against the side of the chimney, he collected some of the old flag-baskets, and breaking them up, piled them in the fire-place and set fire to them—they blazed and roared delightfully up the chimney, diffusing agreeable light and warmth. Then drawing a rude stool to the chimney-corner, and going up to Hagar, he took the two children from her arms, and told her to pull off her snow-covered riding habit and sit there. She did so, and held out her arms to receive the children back. He set them in her lap, and going to the pile of staves, brought and threw them on the burning embers of the flag-baskets, making a great fire, whose light glowed all over the small room, heating it pleasantly. Then he hung up her riding habit to dry, and digging out an old tea-kettle from the pile of rubbish, he clapped his hat upon his head and went out to fill it at a spring that bubbled from the rock by the side of the house; returning he set it on the fire, just as the voices of the men were heard approaching the cabin. They came in, each with a large trunk upon his shoulder, and bearing another by the handles between them. They came in and setting down their burdens prepared to depart and return to the packet—but Gusty, with a gesture, detained them, as he knelt at the side of one of the trunks, and opening it, took out a bottle of brandy, some spices, and a mug, and gave "something to protect them against suffering through the inclemency of the weather."

They then departed, leaving Gusty, Hagar, and the children, sole occupants of the cabin.

"It is vain to think of trying to reach the Hall

Digitized by Google

to-night, Hagar," said Gusty, as he pulled off his greatcoat and hung it near the fire to thaw and dry. "And we must just stay here till morning," he continued, and turning a tub bottom upwards he drew it up to the fire and seated himself, watching and tending the kettle as it progressed towards boiling. "If the men could possibly have stopped and lent us their assistance in carrying the children, I might have helped you, and —but, no! even then it would have been impossible on this frightful night! We should have got lost, and floundered about in snow-drifts until morning, if we had not perished before then; the snow is so much deeper than I had any idea of before leaving the packet," and Gusty, taking a stick, and passing it through the handle, lifted the boiling kettle from the fire, and set it on the hearth, saying, "I am going to make you some spice tea, Hagar, to restore your circulation and send out a perspiration; you are chilled to death, your hands are livid," and putting some cloves into the mug, he poured some of the boiling water upon it and set it down to steep.

All this time, Hagar had heard his remarks without replying to them—seen his efforts for her comfort without acknowledging them; because, after her sudden rise of spirits, she had again sunk into apathy. Soon he took a little rude table—once used in cooking operations—and turning it bottom upwards, and gathering all their outside coverings that were now dried, he made a little warm bed for the babies, and begged Hagar to lay them in it. She did so, covered them up snugly, and resumed her seat.

"I wish, Hagar," said he, as he handed her the mug of spice tea, "I *do* wish that there was a place where you could lie down and take some sleep."

She smiled sadly and shook her head faintly.

"I know *now* what to do," he said, receiving the empty mug from her hand and setting it on the hearth; "yes, I know what to do now," and taking her riding-habit, he hung it from the corner of the mantelpiece down against the wall behind her, and said, "Now, adjust your stool comfortably, Hagar, and lean upon that; you will rest better, and perhaps you will sleep. I shall sit here in front of the hearth, and watch to keep the fire going."

And so the party remained through all that stormy night. *But!* Hagar had better have braved the fearful ascent of the precipice through that terrible storm—had better have perished in the snow—on that horrible night, than have lived to defy the more fatal tempest of calumny raised by her lodging in the fishing-house, and that soon roared and raved around her, striking thunderbolts upon her devoted head.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HAGAR AT HEATH HALL.

"Nessum maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria." DANTE.

ALL night the children slept on their rude pallet, lulled by the howling of the storm, as it came dulled through the thick walls of the fishing-house. All night Hagar slumbered a fitful and uninterrupted slumber, more like a succession of fainting fits than a natural sleep, for overpowered by fatigue, she would fall into a state of deep insensibility, from which she would often start in terror, aroused by a sudden consciousness or dream of wrong, danger, or censure, of a terrible and impending destiny. All night Gusty sat upon the inverted tub drawn up between the fire-dogs, guarding his charges and keeping up the fire. Gusty, in whom the animal so largely predominated, found it very hard to keep awake —yet Gusty, who had never lost a meal's victuals or a night's sleep for any grief or disappointment he had ever suffered—Gusty, now that the health and comfort of others made it necessary for him to do so—propped his eyes open with heroic perseverance. Every one knows how difficult it is to keep from going to sleep, alone, in a quiet room over a good fire; there is something soporific in its genial heat, even in the day time. Gusty could have sworn he had not closed his eyes the whole night, yet by some inexplicable magic he had, or dreamed he had taken up a stick to mend the fire—at deep, dark, stormy midnight—and when he put it down, or when it fell from his hand—the instant after—it was broad, bright, glorious daylight! with the sun beaming a blinding light through the window, whose form was traced in amber radiance upon the opposite wall, near which Hagar stood in her travelling dress, ready for a walk, with the two babies standing clinging to her skirts, and gazing with baby wonder upon the strange scene in which they found themselves.

"Lord!—yes!—well!—I declare!—so it is!" exclaimed Gusty, starting up.

"I am glad you slept well, Gusty, dear, kind friend," said Hagar.

"I never SLEPT!" averred Gusty, with his eyes still wide open with astonishment, thinking himself bewitched.

Hagar smiled sadly to herself, and did not contradict him.

Gusty arose, and shook himself, like a great honest dog roused from slumber, and walking to the door opened it and looked out.

"Oh! Hagar, come!" said he, "look out—what a glorious morning!"

She went up to his side. It was indeed a gorgeous scene! The heath and hills were covered with crusted and brilliant snow, glittering with diamond dust. The forest trees carved in ice, with icicles for foliage. From every bough and bud dropped millions of pendent jewels. Earth wore a gorgeous bridal dress, bedecked with diamonds, and the morning sun kindled up into dazzling splendor the icy glories of the scene, until the snow flashed back to heaven, in lines of blinding light, a glory brilliant as the sun himself. Gusty shaded his eyes from the blinding radiance. Hagar gazed unwinking with her eagle eyes upon the landscape, until the fire kindled in her cheek and burned on her lips. When they had breathed the pure air, and enjoyed the prospect a few minutes, Gusty said,

"You must remain here an hour, Hagar, until I go to the Hall and fetch a horse—it is almost impossible for you to get over these slippery and mountainous snow-drifts yet."

Digitized by Google

"But it will be quite impossible to get over it with a horse."

"Yes, just now it will, but in an hour or two the crust will be melted. Oh! this snow, deep as it is, will not last long; it comes too late in the season; the last offering of old winter, who turned back to make it. Yes, there is a great change since last night, I should think the thermometer had risen thirty degrees. I declare the sun begins to feel warm on my shoulders. Well, Hagar, stay here till I come. Oh! there are some crackers in my trunk, if you want them for the children, here are the keys," and throwing them to her, he buttoned up his great coat, drew on his gloves, clapped his hat upon his head, and set out. He might have been gone an hour, but she heard no trampling of horse feet upon the snow, and so was unconscious of their approach until Gusty opened the door, and stood smilingly with his broad good-humored face within it. Behind him—standing on tip-toe, to look over his shoulder, was Tarquinius, grinning with delight from ear to ear, and breaking past them, yelping defiance like fire and sword, sprang two pointers straight upon Hagar, whom they overwhelmed with welcome caresses! She started with brightening eyes, and returned their honest fondling. Then how they bounded, leaped, and fell into convulsions of joy! or lay their muzzles out upon her lap, every hair vibrating with a still delight.

"Come, Mrs. Withers, are you quite ready?" said Gusty, drawing off his gloves and putting them into his pocket.

"Oh, yes, quite ready."

"How do you do, Tarquinius?" said she, kindly holding out her hand to the man that had been standing smiling and bowing his reverential welcome (making his *obedience*, he called it), through all this scene. "How is old Cumbo—how is your grandmother, Tarquin?"

"Putty much de same, I tank you, ma'am—I does not see any changes."

"Yet she is very aged."

"Yes, ma'am, but her ages does not get any wusser, but commiserably better."

"Can she do anything for herself?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am! she deforms de cookinary boderations as well as ever she did," and making two or three deep bows, Tarquinius Superbus retired from the conference.

There was an unusual kindliness in Hagar's manner while inquiring after the welfare of her old nurse; one of the blessed influences of sorrow was beginning to manifest itself—her heart was softening, becoming capable of being impressed by the afflictions of others.

"Hagar, come!" said Gusty, lifting up a child in each arm, and preceding her from the door.

Hagar followed, and no sooner had she emerged into the dazzling sunlight upon the crusted snow, than with a neigh of joy her little jet black pony Starlight, bounded to meet her. She fell upon his neck, caressing him, as if he had been her brother, too surprised and glad to ask an explanation of his arrival. She patted, talked to him, and laying her hand upon his mane, sprang into the saddle with something of her former agility and gladness. She had thought the coming of the dogs accidental, she thought that Gusty had met them on an early hunt, and that they had naturally recognised an old friend and followed him to the house; but now that she felt herself again upon Starlight's back, with the dogs at her feet, she wondered how it came so.

"Sit Agatha here before me, Gusty, I can hold her with one hand, and guide Starlight with the other. I mean to accustom the children early to riding."

"And which *is* Agatha, and which is Agnes? —hang me if I can tell, though I have a preference! for this little one on my left arm loves me the most, presses close to me, looks up in my face, and seeks my eyes; and if I turn away my head, she puts up her little dimpled hand upon my chin, and turns my face around again, till she can see my eyes. God love her! God bless her! the loving darling! while this other child sits perched upon my arm, as if it were a high chair, with closed lips and level gaze, with all the composed dignity of an infant princess. Now, which is Agatha, and which is Agnes? If my loving darling is Agatha, I won't give her up."

"No, your favorite is Agnes—the other is Agatha; hand her to me; and, Gusty, I wish you would not manifest the slightest preference for one child above the other—it is a fatal cruelty. Agatha is still, because she has less vitality than her sister; she is more delicate, dear child. I discovered it the first moment I had an opportunity of comparing them."

Gusty placed the sedate infant in her mother's care, and seemed very well pleased to be relieved from the burden, and at liberty to devote his whole care to the "loving darling" in his arms. And so the party set out over the brilliant snow, under the glorious sunshine. They reached the old Hall in twenty minutes' ride. Agatha had fallen asleep on her mother's bosom. They entered through the broken gate, and Hagar rode quite up to the piazza, and handing the sleeping babe to Tarquinius, she sprang from her saddle, took back the child, and entering the doorway, stood one moment in silent prayer, and passed on into the parlor, where stood old Cumbo leaning on her stick, with a red handkerchief on her head, tied under her chin, and forming a brilliant red frame around a face, black, wrinkled, and shining as a dried prune. Awed by the memory of Hagar's pride and hardness, the old woman did not advance to welcome her, but when Hagar approached and spoke to her gently and kindly, she fell to crying and calling her dear "piccaninni." Hagar looked around upon the scene; it appeared to her strange that everything had remained unchanged during the long century that her two years' absence seemed to be. It was the same old parlor papered with the martyrs—with the shadows of the same poplar trees intercepting the sun at the windows that looked out upon the piazza. A good hickory fire was burning on the ample hearth, and a good breakfast smoking on the table. Hagar set her child down upon the carpet, and began to take off her travelling dress, just as Gusty entered, followed by Tarquinius, bearing a dish of fine white perch, fried, which he had just brought from the kitchen, and now set upon the table. They sat down to breakfast.

"These are very nice, Tarquin—did you catch them?" asked Gusty, placing a perch upon the plate before him.

Digitized by Google

"Yes, sir! I did, sir; I most in general confuses my ledger hours by angulating in the bay, whenever the perdition of the hemisphere commits."

"Ah, that's right; has my mother—has Mrs. Buncombe been over at the Hall to give any directions?"

"No, sor, but de reverend gen'lem'n, sir, he come ober, and dejected us to have ebery ting impaired, and all the molestic confairs deranged for Mrs. Widders, an' so we have conveyed his ardors to de best of our debility."

"Thank you—you are a valuable agent!—Hagar!"

"Well?"

"I shall have to take leave of you immediately after breakfast; I must see my mother—she is uneasy, I know—perhaps sick. Say, are they all well over to the Grove, Tarquin?"

"Yes, sir, de reveren gen'lem'n, he has got over his room-atism, and goes all over the house; but he is inflicted with a dog-matism in his ear, owing to Mr. Green's big dog, Silver, jumpin' up and bitin' him."

"Oh!"

"Speaking of dogs, will you tell me, Gusty, how Starlight, and Remus, and Romulus came here?"

"Came here? Why, they have been here all the time; did not you know it?"

"No, indeed; tell me about it."

"In the first place, the dogs would not stay anywhere else. Gardiner Green tied them up, but they gnawed their rope in two and fled to the Hall; and then he caught them and chained them, but they kept such a dismal howling—"

"Poor dogs!"

"That Mrs. Green, who is very superstitious, insisted on their being set at liberty, and they immediately returned to the Hall!"

"Dear, true dogs! Well, but Starlight?'

"Yes, Starlight! *he* was worse, it was a regular conspiracy. Star behaved like a comet—like a devil let loose. Gardiner Green mounted him on Sunday to ride to church, but no sooner was he prisoned on the saddle, than Star shot forward like a meteor, while Green fell upon his neck and grasped his mane; Star fled across the meadow, making the turf fly beneath his digging feet, fled towards the river, plunged in, swam it, climbed the opposite side, and took the way towards the forest. Soon the pointers came baying behind him. On fled Star, with Green clinging in deadly terror to his neck, bent on a regular steeple chase, bounding over the hills, tearing through the forest, springing over gates, leaping across chasms, till at last reaching and clearing Devil's Gorge at a bound, he sent Gardiner Green spinning from his back like a shot from a pop-gun! and keeping on his course, arrived in a somewhat excited state of mind at his own stall at Heath Hall, where the pointers soon overtook him. Gardiner Green was picked up by those who went to look for him, battered, bruised, and terrified nearly to death, but not lamed, dead, or otherwise injured. The next morning they sent over and had Starlight led back; and Starlight stepped statelily forth with the indignant air and threatening eye of a captive king led in triumph, who expects yet to rise and crush his enemies."

"My noble Starlight!"

"Oh! he was a hero—he was not born to be a slave, or to serve any master except for love."

"Like his mistress," thought Hagar, and her brow grew dark with recollection.

"Well, they carried him home and geared him up into Mistress Green's gig—but he ran away with that, threw Mrs. Green out, spoiling her beauty but not seriously injuring her—kicked the gig to flinders, and brought the remnant of his gearing as a trophy home to the stables of Heath Hall that very evening. Then they put him in a cart, which he served in the same manner. Then they put him in a plough with another horse."

"Poor, dear Starlight—to degrade my elegant Starlight so!"

"Exactly! but his highness, Prince Starlight, the Black Prince, would not stand it—he kicked, and reared, and plunged, and tried to excite his comrade to run away. And when his small-souled comrade would not, he bit him severely on the neck, as a punishment for helping to keep him prisoner. And then Gardiner Green offered 'the black fiend' to any one for half the price he gave for him. It was just at this juncture of affairs that I had run down here to see mother again before going the voyage I expected to sail on, and hearing of this, I gladly purchased the horse at half-price, and returned him to the stables at Heath Hall, for the use of Hagar if ever she should return—for, Hagar, it is demonstrated that he will not serve man, woman, or child, but you."

"I know that," said Hagar, "and Gusty, I thank you, very sincerely—but I must repay you."

"Be hanged if you shall! I will give him to you, but as for *selling him to you!* I'd cut his throat first! I was very willing to pay a good price for him, only I was enraged with that old brute, Gardiner Green, for having the atrocious assurance to buy your horse and dogs without your consent; for, of course, Hagar, I knew perfectly well that you would never have agreed to the sale, and so I would not be generous! I was too glad to punish his fault through his tenderest point, his pocket."

"But," said Hagar, choking with the unavailing effort to speak *a name* that had not passed her lips since its owner was lost to her sight, "*he* sold them, and of course my consent was understood or unnecessary."

This was the first occasion upon which even the most distant allusion was made between Hagar and Gusty to the party that was nevertheless ever present to the minds of both. Gusty soon after arose from the table, and in taking leave of Hagar, promised that if it were possible for his mother to venture through the deep snow, he would bring her over in the afternoon.

The family of Grove Cottage had just arisen from breakfast. The parson had just buttoned up his greatcoat, set his hat upon his head, and was drawing on his wool-lined gloves for a walk to the village, when the door opened, and Gusty entered.

"Oh! how do you do?" exclaimed Mr. Buncombe, slightly starting back with surprise, and then cordially shaking his hand. Gusty, returning his salute, passed on to where his mother sat at the head of the table. Emily arose with tears

Digitized by Google

in her eyes. Gusty caught and folded her warmly to his bosom.

Mr. Buncombe returned, and laying his hand upon his step-son's shoulder, said—"Gusty, my boy, I am called to the sick-bed of one of my parishioners, and must leave you. I am sorry, but I shall meet you here at dinner?"

"Yes, sir. Oh! never mind me, my dear sir."

The parson departed, and Gusty releasing his mother, snatched up his infant sister, Rose, and began to cover her with caresses and praises by way of diverting the storm of maternal grief and resentment, that he felt too ready to break over his head. Emily was weeping bitterly, until, seeing *his* grief and embarrassment, she arose and fell upon his shoulder, exclaiming,

"Oh, Gusty! Gusty! you have destroyed the labor and the hopes of many years and cares. You have nearly broken my heart—but you are welcome, nevertheless! Welcome, welcome, my boy!"

"Mother! *don't*, now *don't*—don't make me *feel* like a brute, when I *know* I have behaved like a man!" said Gusty, setting down the child, and returning his mother's embrace. "I have not merited this misfortune, mother; and I know that therefore, sooner or later, it will turn out well!"

"Ah! but, Gusty, it is *such* a blow! and you did nothing to avert, and will do nothing to remedy it! *Why* did you not, why *do* you not, even now, hasten to Washington, and petition to be reinstated?"

"I would see the whole United States Navy swamped first, mother! No, much as I honor my flag, I honor myself more! and God most!"

"Ah, Gusty! 'God helps those who help themselves,' is a very true proverb."

"May be so—but I'll improve upon that, 'God helps those who help their neighbors!' I have Scripture for *that*, mother; 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days it shall return, and whoso giveth, *lendeth* to the Lord.' Come, mother, I lost my commission by doing a higher duty than any I owed my flag, and so I am not uneasy; but, mother, you have not once inquired after Hagar, who landed last night in the midst of the storm, and who is now at the Hall."

"Well! how should I be able to think of Hagar, when I have so many anxieties on your account, unfortunate boy? but how is Hagar, then?"

"Recovering slowly, but *very* slowly; will you not go over to see her, then, this afternoon?"

Emily was silent and thoughtful, and sooth to say, rather displeased at the proposition.

"Will you not, mother? Come, mother; when you see Hagar, so wretched, so ill, so changed, your unjust displeasure with her will be dissipated; you should not indeed feel angry with her because she was the involuntary, the unconscious cause of my misfortune, which she does not even know of yet—thinking I am on furlough—and do not tell her, mother."

"Yes, but I see no *reason* for all this wretchedness. I knew that Hagar madly loved her husband, but I do not see why his leaving her for two years should cause her to lose the power of directing her own life, and so cause you to lose all the hopes and prospects of yours."

Gusty mused. Could he, he thought, enlighten his mother as to the *real* state of affairs? After some minutes' reflection, he determined to keep the secret of the elopement, veiled as it was by the foreign mission; both because, though his suspicions came as near truth as suspicions *could* come, yet they were not fully proved—*he* might feel very sure himself, yet he might not be able to assure another mind—and because he did not wish to inflict upon his mother another sorrow, in addition to the one she was now almost sinking under. He felt sure that she would never receive a hint from Hagar, whom self-esteem, as well as her continued and inevitable love for her husband, would keep silent upon the subject of his perfidy, and her own wrongs and sufferings.

After dinner, Emily, attended by her son, rode towards Heath Hall.

When Gusty May had left the breakfast-table for his walk to Grove Cottage, Hagar took her two children up to her own chamber—to her old eyrie in the third story. This room also was unchanged—except—yes! there sat her children's little rose-wood crib, with all its furniture, just as it was before it had been sold at the third execution. There could be but *one* to whom she was indebted for this delicate attention, and though her morbid pride was at first startled, yet her affections were touched by this instance of disinterested friendship.

Without any pretensions, Gusty was doing everything to sanctify the uses of adversity to the heart of Hagar. It was impossible not to be softened by the kind offices of a friendship that gave everything without hope or even thought of return. This was Hagar's first, her *very* first experience of disinterested affection—the love of Raymond was intensely selfish, craving only the possession of its object, regardless of her affections or her happiness—and Hagar had felt that bitterly through all her married life, and most bitterly in her desertion. The effect of this selfish and cruel abandonment on the character of Hagar's mind and heart, must have been most deleterious, fatal, but that the antidote was provided in a new phase of human sympathy revealed to her in the disinterested affection of one—an alien by blood—a rejected and humbled lover of her girlhood, a sufferer by the same treachery that laid her own hopes in the dust; one who, without pretending to any fine feelings, or expressing any fine sentiments, had quietly suppressed and concealed his own griefs, in ministering to her wants, in trying to alleviate her sorrows. Hagar's maternity had first inspired her deepest prayer—her children had been the angels sent to conduct her heart to God—to whom, ever since, with an almost hearing, seeing, touching faith, she had offered all her joys, gratitudes, and praises, and where, alas! she had also impiously carried all her fears, complaints, and reproaches. But now she must ask a boon of Providence, that He would bless and prosper the kind soul that she was unable to benefit. This was the silent prayer—the silent fragrance rising from the bruised heart to heaven—while she loosened her babies' clothes, and laid them in the crib to take their forenoon nap. And then she looked around the pleasant room with its agreeable associations, the extensive prospect from the windows of the broad river, the village

Digitized by Google

with its little stir and bustle on the opposite side, the boundless bay with its occasional passing packet, all inspiring the feeling of life, liberty, and strength. If God is a kind father, as all his children devoutly feel and acknowledge, *Nature* is a good nursing mother, and under the care of both, Hagar was even now beginning to feel her torpid life stir again. She was at *home*, under her own roof; what if the house were half a ruin—it was HER OWN. She was upon her own land, and though it was only a desert heath, it was HER OWN. There was a sense of independence in that, and of pride in the thought that for this home she was not indebted to Mr. Withers—for, though she still *must* love him, in her high self-appreciation she now felt an unconquerable reluctance to receive anything from him who had withdrawn his love and personal protection. And then there was a sense of returning power in the new life that was tiding in and filling all her veins. Turning from the window, from which she had been gazing, her eye fell upon her own image in the glass; that glass which had so often reflected the slight dark figure of the high-spirited maiden, whose long blue-black ringlets glittered down a crimson cheek blushing with pride, *now* gave back the form of the matron, whose fair, wan, spiritual face was faintly flushed with returning life, and softly shaded by the tiny black ringlets of the young hair just visible under the delicate lace border of her little cap. Hagar scarcely knew herself. It was so strange to see that changed picture in that frame.

Returning and looking again at her children, she drew the light muslin curtain around them, and left the room to take a look through the house. She went into the large, old drawing-room hall, as it was called in those days, and there the first thing that met her eyes was her grand piano, and her harp, from the Rialto. Hagar started in surprise and embarrassment—the burden of obligation was beginning to feel oppressive—she called Tarquin in.

"When did these arrive, and who brought them here?"

"They 'riv' 'tother day, ma'am, by the packet 'Future,' Cap'n Hope, who sent 'em up to the Hall by two sailors."

"With any message?"

"No, ma'am, freight paid in advance—dinner is ready, Mrs. Withers," said the man, throwing open the parlor door with all the ceremonious observance of "better days." Hagar passed in and sat down to her solitary meal. It was a well served, delicate little repast, purveyed by the affectionate care of Cumbo and Tarquin from the rich resources of the Heath and bay, which were always abundantly supplied with wild game, water fowl, fish, crabs, oysters, &c., in their respective seasons. There was no danger of our Hagar starving, and that was one comfort; nor of her freezing, as long as the forest stood behind the Heath, and that was another consolation. Her dinner was scarcely over and the things removed from the table, when looking through the window, she saw Emily on her little mare with her little girl before her, and Gusty riding by her side. This of course was the first sight she had had of Emily for two years past; she hastened out to meet her. Gusty had dismounted, and was lifting his little sister from his mother's lap, previous to assisting her from the saddle. She greeted Hagar with as much cordiality as could be expected under the circumstances. Hagar immediately ran, and lifting, caressed the little girl that was but a few months older than her own children. Emily's sullen anger was somewhat softened by witnessing the sincere interest manifested by the youthful mother in *her* child, and so they went into the house. Soon Hagar led her babies, who could now walk, into the room, and the two women for a time forgot—the one her pride, the other her anger, and both their antagonism, in comparing and admiring the three babies as they toddled about. Emily remained to tea, and forgot her displeasure so far as not only to suppress the fact of her son's having been cashiered, but also to invite Hagar to come and spend a week at Grove cottage, as soon as she should be able to go out.

The next morning, directly after breakfast, Gusty came over to Heath Hall to inquire after Hagar and the babies, and to know if she wanted anything.

"Yes, Gusty, I want to speak to you. Come in here, Gusty," and taking his hand she drew him into the drawing-room and pointed to the piano and harp.

"Ah, yes! certainly! give me a tune!" said Gusty, blushing and stammering with embarrassment.

"But, Gusty, *you* sent these here!"

"Oh—yes—well—what of it?"

"Only *this*, Gusty, that you are *very good, too good* for your own sake—but, Gusty, dear friend, you must not lavish such presents upon me."

"Oh! nonsense! oh, pshaw! they were sold at auction, and I bought them in for a mere trifle."

"Yes, but, dear friend, there are many reasons why you should not offer and I receive costly presents like these. Much as I dislike to do it I shall have to draw—upon—upon *his* banker and pay you for them as well as for the horse and dogs."

"HAGAR!"

"Dear Gusty, now listen to me quietly, *it must be so;* and moreover, dear Gusty, you must not get into the habit of visiting me every day as you appear inclined to do. You must never come to see me, Gusty, except in company with your mother."

"THUNDER!" roared Gusty. "Hagar, how have I deserved that sentence? I can't stand that!"

"Listen, Gusty! when I was a girl you know I did not care at all what people said or thought of me. I cared for nothing but to keep my Maker's laws, because no one cared for me then."

"And no one cares for you *now* as I can see!" said Gusty, rudely.

"No—*but I care for others!* I care for the honor of one whose honor is more vulnerable through *me* than through *himself!* Once I was unconnected, and if society had misunderstood, judged, and condemned me, I should have fallen alone! and so I had courage to do as I pleased and defy the fate! *now* I am closely entwined with others, who, when *I* am struck down, fall with me. I am weak, fettered, enslaved through them, Gusty. I cannot do as I please, and though I esteem and respect you beyond all other people in the world with one exception,

Digitized by Google

and though your society would be the greatest solace in my reach, yet I must forego it, dear Gusty."

"You have no faith in my honor, in your own purity, or in God! that is just the amount of it," growled Gusty, straightening himself up with tears in his eyes as he buttoned up his greatcoat. "It seems to me you are not yourself; you are weak."

"I am weak *through those I love*, Gusty!"

"And do you, Hagar, really *hope* to propitiate the gossips of ——— county by this course? and do you, a deserted wife!—there it's out! well! it has been *in* both our minds continually, so it had as well come out. I say, do you expect to be let alone? Do you not know that the old grudge against your wild girlhood will be remembered, and now that an opportunity is offered, will be visited with fury on your head. You will be cast forth from here, Hagar; a ground-swell of slander and persecution will lift and lift you, Hagar, until you take wing. Did you think when I brought you to be nursed into health and strength by the bracing air of your native heath, that I thought that you would stay *here?* No, Hagar! I could prophesy *more* for you, but I will not now. I will leave you to the force of circumstances; to the inspirations of your own genius—to God in fine. But you are wrong to discard me. I have not deserved it. *I* say it! But I charge all this weakness of yours upon bodily ill health. Good morning, Hagar;" and shaking her hand affectionately, he clapped his hat upon his head and went out.

It happened as Gusty had predicted. Hagar remained weeks, months at Heath Hall, and no one visited her—not a soul had come to welcome her back to her native neighborhood except the Buncombes. All sorts of evil reports got into circulation against her. She was, as Gusty said, a rich waif for the gossips of ——— county. Some were contented with repeating that her husband had left her, that "of course he had good reason," asserting that they "had always expected it." Others declared that *she* had eloped from *him*, and averred that they had "said so long ago." Some said positively that he had left her upon account of the intimacy subsisting between herself and Lieutenant May—others had discovered that Lieutenant May had been cashiered upon her account, &c., &c., &c. Many other and more fatal rumors got into circulation, and though they never reached the ears of Hagar, she felt them in the utter abandonment and solitude into which she was suffered to fall; for even Emily's visits became shorter and colder, and "few and far between," until they ceased altogether, and Hagar Withers was left *alone!* And it was under these circumstances, and when her twins were little over a year old, that her third child was born. It was a little, fair-skinned, blue-eyed, golden-haired boy—with the very soul of Raymond Withers reposing on his features; and Hagar, if she could not love the babe more upon that account, was happier in her love, because the face of the baby gave her back the features of her absent and lost one.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REMORSE.

"Pangs more corrosive and severe,
More fierce, more poignant and intense
Than ever hostile sword or spear
Waked in the breast of innocence."
MARGARET OF ANJOU.

ROSALIA AGUILAR was not one to enjoy an hour's impunity in sinning. From the time of her passing Churchill's Point—through all the days of her passage down the bay to Norfolk—up to the time of her embarkation—and through all the weeks of her long sea voyage, she had remained in a sort of horrid waking dream—with her life broken off in the middle, and its innocence and happiness wafted away—receding with the receding shores of her native country. Raymond vainly waited for the struggle to cease, when she might repose calmly in his power. The struggle *had* ceased, but the issue had not been what he hoped and expected. The struggle had ceased—passion was conquered, and remorse was the victor, the judge, and the executioner. Her health declined daily; her features grew sharp, and her complexion of a blue transparent paleness. She became so feeble at last as to be almost unable to go upon deck. Every day she expressed an earnest wish to reach the end of her voyage. Every hour she besought Raymond when he should land, to place her in some quiet, obscure retreat, and leave her for ever—leave her to die alone—to die in peace. And Raymond would endeavour to soothe her, while evading her despairing entreaties. At last Rosalia ceased to make them, and seemed resigned to her destiny. And Raymond deceived himself with the fond belief that she was content, and pleased himself with the hope that once upon the shores of sunny Italy her health and spirits would return, especially when towards the end of the voyage, and after they had entered the Mediterranean, she revived so much as to be able to come on deck every morning and evening. In this seemingly promising state of affairs, they arrived at Genoa—the post of Raymond Withers's consulship. On the voyage out Miss Aguilar had passed for what she really was—the ward of Captain and Mrs. Wilde—going out under the protection of the new Consul, to rejoin them. It had been the design of Raymond Withers, on reaching the shores of Italy, to find some convenient and obscure, but beautiful palazzo, buried in some fragrant grove by the side of some lovely stream—furnish and adorn it to please his own luxurious taste, and enshrine his idol there, where the privacy of the retreat would prevent exposure for some time. How he expected to meet the further difficulties that make "the way of the transgressors so hard" does not appear.

They landed at Genoa. Raymond Withers took his ward at once to a hotel, saw her comfortably ensconced in her own apartment, and promising to meet her at dinner, left her for the purpose of presenting his credentials in the proper quarter.

It was about three o'clock when he left the hotel—it was five when he returned, sought his own chamber, changed his dress, and sent a waiter to the apartment of Miss Aguilar, to

Digitized by Google

know if she were ready for dinner. The man returned after some time, saying that he supposed the young lady was sleeping, as he had knocked loudly but received no answer. Raymond settled it in his own mind that she was taking an afternoon's nap, and waited patiently for an hour, then touching the bell, he sent the waiter that answered it again to the chamber of Rosalia, and again the man returned in a few minutes, with the information that the young lady was still sleeping. Raymond thought that Rosalia was taking a very long sleep, and hoped she might awake refreshed and cheerful, and be able to spend the evening pleasantly with him. He ordered dinner and ate it alone. Then selecting a delightful little private parlor, which contained, among other luxuries, a grand piano, he took possession of it, giving directions that an elegant little supper should be prepared and set on the table there at ten o'clock.

And there he sat waiting, promising himself an evening of delight, with Rosalia's society, and his long lost luxury—music. At nine o'clock he sent a third time to the chamber-door, and a third time the waiter returned to say that no answer was given to his knock. Now, for the first time, a feeling of uneasiness arose in Raymond Withers's bosom; and reluctant as he was to violate any of the external proprieties of life, whatever he might do with its moralities, he determined to go to her room and see what was the matter. He went, rapped at her door, received no answer—rapped a second time and louder, and waited, listening with his ear to the lock; *all was silent as death!* Then he tried the lock and found it fast. In real alarm now he knocked loudly, beating and shaking the door, and calling on the name of Rosalia—then suddenly stopping while the sounds died away in silence, he put his ear to the key-hole and listened—*the stillness of the grave was within!* Terrified now, he hastened from the door to the nearest bell-rope, jerked it down, and broke the wires with his energetic pull, sending peals of alarm through the house that brought the landlord and half the servants in the establishment to his presence.

"Are you sure that this is the room in which the young American lady was placed?" he inquired of the host.

"Si, Signore."

"Are you *certain?*" he again asked in Italian.

"Si, Signore, *certainly*," replied the landlord in the same language.

"Then I must have the door forced—the young lady entered this chamber at three o'clock, and though summoned both to dinner and to supper, has not made her appearance or replied to the call, or given, in fact, the slightest sign of her presence, or even of her existence! and it is now ten o'clock. I am extremely anxious concerning her, and must have the door forced. Clear away all these people, signor landlord; I did not want the whole establishment about my ears—and bring an instrument to force this lock. I tell you that I am consumed with anxiety!"

"Si, Signore; what does Signore think may be the matter?" inquired the host, as with a wave of his hand he dismissed all his attendants and took a master key from his girdle.

"Matter! how can I tell? the lady may be ill, dead, in a lethargy; open the door; *do!* without more delay."

The landlord placed the key in the door, turned it, and throwing open the door, bowed, and was about to withdraw, when Raymond Withers recalled him by a gesture, and both entered the chamber. The room was unoccupied, the bed empty, and its perfectly smooth and neat appearance proved that it had not been slept in. Yet Rosalia's trunks were on the floor; her pet doves, released from their cage, were perched upon the top of the dressing-glass; and even her dark blue velvet travelling dress and close beaver bonnet, lay upon the white Marseilles counterpane that covered the bed. Raymond gazed around in perplexity and distress. There was no other mode of exit from the room except the door by which they had entered, and the windows; he went to one and raised it; pshaw! the fall to the ground was fifty feet; a bird would have risked its neck in taking the flight; and Raymond turned away from the window in despair, to detect the landlord's smile, which was quickly drawn in as he met his guest's anxious gaze of inquiry, and replied to it by saying—

"The young lady could only have left the room by the door at which we entered, sir—and she must have locked her door, and taken the key with her; and to prove it, see—there is no other means of exit from the room; and when we came we found the door fastened, the room vacant, and the key gone," said he, pointing to the lock. Raymond Withers was half stupified with astonishment at her absence, and alarm for her fate.

"Had she any acquaintance in the city?" inquired the host.

"Oh, of course not—*not one*—she was a perfect stranger."

"She *may* be in the house; I will inquire," said the landlord.

"*Do*, and be quick, will you?" said Raymond Withers, lifting the lamp from the dressing-table, where he had set it at first entering the room. As he raised up the light, his eyes fell on a small white note that, lying upon the white cover of the table, had escaped his first glance, so that he had set the lamp down upon it and concealed it until this instant. Snatching it up now, he saw that it was directed to himself in the handwriting of Rosalia; he tore it open and read—

"Good-bye, Raymond—I am gone. Forgive me, Raymond, all the sin I have caused you to commit—all the suffering I have made you undergo—and when I dare to pray, I will implore the God of Mercy to bless and heal you. I have left you in this abrupt manner, Raymond, because I knew that you would not have suffered me to depart had you suspected my intentions; nor, to tell the truth, had I the courage to brave the anguish of a parting scene. I had long resolved on this. Indeed, had it not been for this resolution, I should never have lived to reach the land, Raymond. This resolution was the secret of my recovery at sea; a temporary recovery only, I begin now to think it was, Raymond, for to-night a mortal languor overpowers me; I can scarcely raise myself from my chair, or draw one weary foot after the other; yet must their last strength be spent in bearing me away from you, as surely as my last breath shall be spent in praying for you, Raymond. I do not know where I am going—towards what point of the compass my failing steps will stray—to some quiet spot where I can lie down and go to sleep—I have not been to sleep since *that day!*—that day when I kneeled down by the side of your lounge, and, with my head upon your cushion, sobbed myself to sleep, while you looked gently in my face and stroked my hair, soothing into stillness

Digitized by Google

the tempest in my bosom. Ah, that day, when waking up, I, unfortunate! became your Eve, tempting you to sin! No more, alas! I have not slept since then; for though I have laid down and shut my eyes, I have never lost myself—never lost consciousness of my sin—my remorse—and never lost sight of one image—the image of Hagar! oh! I feel it sacrilege for me to trace the letters that form her name!—of Hagar, as she stood pale in the grey morning light, with her black hair streaming down her wan cheeks. In that form her spirit always stands before me night and day, and I cannot shut it out and sleep. I shall escape this image in leaving you, Raymond, and so I shall be permitted to go to sleep and die; for it was you she followed, cleaved to, not me; and this is the reason, I know it, she never looks indignant and reproachful, as she used to look at me, even when I did not understand her look—but deprecating, loving, imploring, and most wretched as she used to look at you when in her anguish she forgot that other eyes than yours were on her. Good bye, Raymond! my tears are falling fast—thank God, they can flow once more! they have been scorching up in their fountains so long! Ah, now I understand poor Hagar's dry sobs! and the untold agony breaking forth through them! as much more awful than the grief of tears as the burning sirocco of the desert is more terrible than the April shower. Well, I can weep now, thank God! Come, I shall be able to sleep soon; perhaps I shall even grow calm enough to die. Good-bye—take care of my doves; I would like to take them with me, but they would perish where I shall go to sleep. Give them to Hagar's children—there! now the tears are raining from my eyes again. Oh, Raymond, I would lose my soul to save, to redeem yours! would descend into hell to purchase you a place among the archangels! Good-bye! good-bye! Alas! I shall write all night; I cannot tear myself from the paper that yet connects me with you. Good-night, Raymond! I pour my whole heart and soul, my life and immortality in one blessing, and breathe it in the words, *Good-Night!*

"Why has a revolution passed through my soul within the last minute, and since writing the last good-night? Why do I feel now as though it were a sin to leave you? Am I going crazy again? Oh, my God! Let me escape while a ray of reason is left to light my path! Good-night, again, and yet again! Bless, *bless* you, Raymond! Oh, if I could dissolve my being into a fragrance of blessing, and envelope you in it!—into a halo of blessing, and crown you with it!—that I could do what I please with my own soul, and lose it in your heart to give you fuller life! Yes, I would annihilate myself and give my spirit to enlarge your life; and yet I cannot do a *less* thing—I cannot, *cannot* break the heart of a sister woman—of Hagar—even for *you*. Raymond! CANNOT! do you hear and understand, Raymond? For though I would give my body to be burned, and my soul to perdition for your sake, I have NO RIGHT TO SACRIFICE ANOTHER! and that truth has been thundered in my ears until my very brain is stunned. My senses are reeling, whirling. I scarcely know where I am, what I write, where I go; I only feel, oh God! that I leave you for ever—that my whole soul sobs forth in bitterest anguish its wail—*Good-Night!*"

The first part of this passionate and incoherent letter was nearly illegible with the marks of tears; the last sentences were traced wildly and scrawlingly.

Seeing the excitement, the insanity under which this letter must have been written, and in the deepest grief for her loss, and the utmost alarm for her safety, he hastened from the room, and caused the strictest inquiries to be set on foot, that resulted, however, in nothing satisfactory. The chambermaid who had attended her on her first arrival was questioned, but could only say that just as soon as she had assisted the young lady in removing her travelling-dress, she had been dismissed by her. The porter was examined, but had seen no one pass answering to the description of the young American lady. So all the people about the establishment were interrogated without any information being elicited. A fruitless search was kept up through all the night—no trace of the fugitive could be discovered. This was perhaps the very first night's rest that Raymond Withers, the systematic voluptuary, had ever lost. Towards sunrise, after having given directions for the search to be kept up, he threw himself upon his bed, and overcome by anxiety, watching, and fatigue, slept the sleep of exhaustion. Late in the day he awoke, with that dreary sense of vague weight that oppresses the head and brain at the first awakening after a great sorrow. It was some minutes before the fact was clear before his eyes. Rosalia fled—Rosalia lost—wandering, and exposed, in all her tenderness and delicacy, to all the horrors of unsheltered life. This was the first time that the benevolence of Raymond Withers had been awakened for his victim. Her mental and moral throes and struggles he had not pitied, because he had not understood them; but the epicurean fully comprehended and greatly exaggerated the importance of the physical sufferings she might have to endure. He dressed in haste, and going out inquired anxiously if news had been received of Miss Aguilar. He was told that no clue had been found by which to trace her course. All that day was spent in a vain search through the city and its suburbs—all that week was devoted to sending messengers down all the public roads, and to the neighboring villages seeking the lost one; but the end of the week—the end of the month, found them as far from the attainment of their object as they were at its commencement. Once or twice it had occurred to Raymond Withers that she might have fled to Captain Wilde and Sophie, "her young heart's cynosure," but then he quickly recollected that Captain and Mrs. Wilde were a thousand miles off, at Constantinople. At last he determined on sending off the letters and packets that had been intrusted to Rosalia for Sophie, to write to Captain Wilde, and to mention merely the facts that Miss Aguilar had come out under his protection with the purpose of joining them at Constantinople—that immediately upon landing at Genoa she had mysteriously disappeared, and that though the most vigilant search had been instituted, and kept up even to the present moment, no clue to her retreat had been found.

It has been said by some philosopher that "Without disease and pain, we should never know that we have a body—and without sin and remorse, never feel that we have a spirit." Raymond Withers could have controverted the first part of this proposition by his own experiences—he was deliciously conscious of his bodily existence through its perfect health and keen enjoyments; but he could have endorsed the latter clause with a pen dipped in tears of blood. Through all its downy coverings of soft voluptuousness, his spirit had been reached and wounded to the very quick; and the method of his remorse was quite characteristic.

By his own agony at the loss of Rosalia, he was enabled for the first time to understand and sympathize with the just and the greater anguish of Hagar at his desertion, and to comprehend in a word, the enormity of his offence. He might have gone on in his luxurious self-indulgence and self-enjoyment for years, had he not yielded to a strong temptation, and wounded his spirit with sin. Now all luxury palled upon his senses—he turned, sickened, from the choicest viands of his table—despairing from the most delightful prospects of nature, and from the most beautiful specimens of art—music was torture,

Digitized by Google

and even in the deepest repose of his body the wounds of his spirit were most keenly felt, until the sensitive epicurean, who would have shrunk from the slightest abrasion of his delicate skin—invoked bodily pain as a relief from spiritual anguish.

Was this illicit love cured, then? Ah, no! not when just as the cup of guilty pleasure had been raised to his lips, it had been dashed untasted to the ground—not when just as the prize was within his grasp it had been snatched away. Nay, that very disappointment of his hopes at the moment of their expected realization sharpened and intensified his desire, while the sin—the sin, as well as the remorse he suffered, gave power and depth to his passion! The boon for which he had bartered his soul, defied God, and lost Heaven, became by the costly purchase a priceless treasure.

There is a crisis in the rise and progress of an evil passion, when its victim becomes morally insane, I had nearly written morally irresponsible.

It is the period described in the beautiful language of Scripture, as the time when the Spirit of God ceases to strive with the heart of man—when he is given over to reprobacy of mind—when Ephraim, joined to his idols, is left alone—when the prodigal son receives his portion and is suffered to go forth and seek the desire of his heart, and find by bitter experience, that forbidden things may be bright to the vision but scorching to the touch—as the restless and eager infant permitted at last to catch at the coveted flame of the candle, learns by its own suffering that pain follows the contact of fire—in a word, when the unbeliever is suffered to prove for himself the bitterness of sin. Is this utter abandonment then? Ah, no! The heart that has sinned, suffered, and repents, is forgiven. The babe has burned its fingers, and learned that the flame is not to be touched with impunity, and we may be sure it will not be touched again. The returning prodigal is received half way without a single reproach for the past, without the exaction of a single pledge for the future; is received upon his experience and his penitence. Ephraim turning from his idols, is accepted; and the Spirit of God comes again to dwell in the heart that is opened to receive him. I say again, when a violator of the moral law suffers, it is not by the vengeance of a God of infinite love and mercy—but it is by a pain he finds in the sin itself. But this by the way.

The downward progress of evil has been aptly called a gently inclined plane, of so gradual a descent that the sinner believes himself to be walking on level ground all the while. "Easy is the descent to hell," said Horace, and doubtless such is most frequently the case; but there are instances in which the downward course is very rapid; where the sinner has started in a run, and after a while—and this answers to the crisis, the insanity of passion—*gets an impetus* that makes a pause *impossible*, until he falls prostrate at the bottom of the abyss.

Such was the case with Raymond Withers—he had reached the crisis of his moral disorder—the insanity of passion—when he was scarcely responsible for his acts; yet not upon this account shall he enjoy impunity; for he could, by a little timely self-discipline, have saved himself from moral mania.

He is answerable for the loss of his moral sanity, if not for acts of his phrensy. But to those acts: With the fatuity of passion, he fancied that were he free to seek the hand of Rosalia, her conscience would be quieted, her reluctance overcome, and that she would give a cheerful response to his love. He brooded over this idea of freedom from his matrimonial bonds with the pertinacity of monomania, until it seemed possible—next probable—then every way natural, proper, and desirable—finally inevitable. A savage resolution, by fair means or foul, to divorce his wife,—or, what was more feasible in his apprehension, to compel her to divorce him—a morose determination to recover and marry Rosalia, at any cost of his own integrity and peace, and others' rights and happiness, occupied his whole thoughts. It was just at this crisis that he received a letter from Hagar. It was dated from Heath Hall, just after the birth of her son. It announced that fact, and gave a short but full account of all that happened since he left home, as well as of all her plans for the future, as far as she had laid them out. Could you have seen the succession of quick, short, self-congratulatory nods with which he read this letter, the smile of fiendish inspiration with which he folded it up and placed it in his desk, you would have given him up for lost, though you had been his very guardian-angel!

With this diabolical grimace still upon his face, Raymond Withers took pen and paper, sat down and wrote a reply, sealed and sent it off that same day by a homeward-bound vessel.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WOUNDED EAGLE.

"Eagle, this is not thy sphere!
Warrior bird! what dost thou here?
Wherefore by the fountain's brink
Dost thy royal pinion sink?
Wherefore on the violet's bed
Lay'st thou thus thy drooping head?
Thou, that hold'st the blast in scorn—
Thou, that bear'st the wings of morn!
Lift thy glance! The fiery sun
Now his pride of place hath won!
And sweet sound hath filled the air,
For the mountain lark is there.
Looking on thine own bright skies—
Eagle! wilt thou not arise?"

HEMANS.

THE spring and summer had passed, and autumn was at hand, yet Hagar had received no letter, or message, or news of her husband. True, the foreign mail was very irregular, interrupted, and uncertain, for those were not the days of steamships, and Emily had not heard from her brother for several months. Hagar bore the slow torture of suspense as well as she could, occupying herself with the care of her three children. She was abandoned to a life that would have been utter solitude, but for the society of her children and the attendance of her servants. At first coming home, she had regularly attended divine service at the parish church; but seeing that her presence there merely drew off the attention of the congregation from their ritual to gaze her out of countenance,

Digitized by Google

as though she had been a monster, and feeling, besides, a difficulty in worshipping among a set of people, who, from malice or thoughtlessness, had slandered and forsaken her, she discontinued her attendance upon the preaching, thereby giving occasion for fresh calumny. The hours not occupied with her family cares were occasionally spent in the pursuits of her old and favorite pastimes, her forest hunts with horse and hounds, or her fishing excursions in a light skiff propelled by one oar. But she liked best her exhilarating woodland sports with their lifegiving power. The resumption of these healthful but half savage habits, gave additional offence to the conventional autocrats of —— county. In her rides she seldom met any one, because her excursions were confined to the Heath and woodlands of her own ruined plantation; so seldom, that when it happened, the person who had seen her would say, "I have met Hagar Withers," in much the same tone that you might exclaim, "I have encountered the sea-serpent." And the hearer would cry "Indeed! where?" with as much astonishment in the first case as they might be supposed to feel in the last. It happened that the first person who had met her in her riding costume was that princess of propriety, Mrs. Gardiner Green, who, taking a hasty inventory of her short, black, boyish looking curls clustering around her forehead and under her little riding cap, and the rolling collar, steel buttons, and coat-sleeves of her habit, had gone away and reported as follows: "She has cut off her hair, and dresses like *a man!*" In her perfect isolation, Hagar heard nothing of all this latter talk.

I said that God was a kind father and Nature a tender, nursing mother; and that our Hagar was getting well under their care. And so it was. In spite of all her past wrongs, griefs, and sufferings, in defiance of all her present regrets, suspense, and anxieties, her spirits had rebounded from their long pressure; health, strength, and life were tiding back. The first of October found her form erect and robust, her limbs full and rounded, her cheeks crimson, and her eye brilliant with high health; and Hagar, in her returning joy, blessed her native air, woods, and waters; praised nature, and worshipped God for her resurrection from the dead, her restoration to the young exultant life of her glad childhood. And what were her plans for the future, and what were her thoughts of her husband? Perhaps wearied with the weight of the incessant thoughts, her mind had thrown off the burden; perhaps rebounding from the long and heavy pressure, her spirits had sprung away from the painful subject; perhaps with the natural wildness of her character she had yielded herself up with childish carelessness to the enjoyments of the present moment. She was disturbed in the midst of her enjoyments by the arrival of a letter bearing a foreign stamp. She found it lying on her plate when she took her seat at the breakfast-table one morning. It had been brought by Tarquinius from the Post Office late on the previous night, after she had gone to rest. She snatched the letter hastily, and tearing open its seal, read—why do Hagar's cheeks flush, her eyes blaze with indignation? The letter conveyed a gross and degrading charge, a humiliating and cruel proposition, and a startling and alarming threat! yet withal, so cautiously written, as were it produced in any court, it would be difficult to convict the *writer* of any more serious offence than outraged affection and injured confidence. It ran thus:

"GENOA, July 15th, 182–.

"HAGAR:—I have just received your letter, with its strange communications—*confessions*, I should rather call them; had such a blow fallen on me a year ago, when I did not know you so well, when I esteemed and loved you, it would have gone nigh to destroy me! even now when I can esteem you no longer, it has given me the deepest pain, more for your sake than for my own, and more upon our children's account than either. Hagar, was it that Satan, after having tempted you to evil, abandoned you to idocy; was it fatuity? or, was it the goading of a wounded conscience that drove you to make these shameful revelations to me? Or, as is most likely, did you hope by being the *first* to tell me of what was inevitable, that with or without your communications, I must soon hear, and by giving your own version of the doings at the Rialto, you could thus blind me as to the *real* state of the case? If you thought so, Hagar, you yourself were the victim of gross self-deception. I will not reproach while jagging and condemning you, Hagar; that were vain and unworthy, but before pronouncing sentence, I will sum up the evidence of your guilt as given in your own unconscious confession, and out of your own mouth condemn you, for, however you may attempt to glaze over the facts, they stand thus: No sooner has your husband quitted his home, upon his official duties, than lo! his place in your house is filled by the lover of your girlhood. Lieutenant May, who, without delay, hastens over five hundred miles of sea and land to join you; he remains with you domesticated under your roof for weeks, and until the house is sold over your heads, while every respectable female servant quits the premises. He takes you from the neighborhood where I had left you, and where I expected when I should return to find you, and carries you off to Maryland. On the night of your arrival, under favor of the storm, you pass the night alone together in the old fishing house, within an eighth of a mile of Heath Hall, which you might have reached in ten minutes. Then your neighbors, shocked and justly indignant at the audacious effrontery of this shameless disregard of public sentiment, have very properly abandoned you.

"Now, then, Hagar, hear me! Since your betrayal of these disgraceful circumstances to my knowledge, I feel a re-union between us to be impossible. *You* must see and feel this also—nay, you yourself could not desire it. Our marriage must be annulled. *I* could do it by widely exposing your guilt, and bringing you to open shame. I am unwilling to take this course, unless by rejecting the only alternative that I have to offer, you leave me no other. This alternative will veil your guilt from the general eye—it is a self-immolating proposition on my part, as I prefer to suffer in myself the unmerited condemnation of society, rather than have the mother of my children, however well she may deserve the fate, consigned to ignominy. My proposition, in a word, is *this*—that *you yourself* annul our marriage—that you divorce *me*—you can do it upon the plea of my desertion of you—suppose that plea was false when I left the country, it is true *now* that I have detected your infidelity—urge that plea—your suit will not be rejected, for the reason that I shall not oppose it—*Do* it, Hagar! and in return, after it *is* done, I will bind myself to leave you in quiet possession of your home and children for the remainder of our lives—*Refuse* to do it, Hagar! and I will return to the United States, and with the terrible army of circumstances that can be marshalled against you, I will overwhelm you, divorce and degrade you, and when that is effected, remove my children from the care of a dishonored woman, whom private experience, public sentiment, legal justice, and legislative wisdom shall have alike condemned, as unworthy of their charge. I await your reply, Hagar.

R. W."

I wish you could have seen Hagar as she read this letter—how much more courageous she was in the endurance than in the anticipation of this evil. You would have felt how strong she had grown in her sorrows, how nobly she had struggled, and how grandly she had soared above them. How, after the first start and flash of indignation, she had read the letter through, and holding it open on her lap, looked straight be-

Digitized by Google

fore her with that air of calm superiority, of grave rebuke, with which one regards the ravings of intoxication.

"I will not reply to this just yet," said Hagar, to herself—and folding the letter, she put it in her pocket and fell into a reverie. It was during this reverie that Hagar was inspired with a resolution, and formed a highly important plan, which, in a few weeks, she prepared to carry into effect.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A REVELATION.

"With wild surprise
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,
A stupid moment motionless he stood
Pierced by severe amazement, hating life,
Speechless and fixed in all the death of woe."
THOMSON'S SEASONS.

"Oh! thou lost
And ever gentle victim—whose most fearful
Fate darkens earth and heaven—what thou now art
I know not, but if thou saw'st what I am,
I think thou would'st forgive him—whom his God
May ne'er forgive—nor his own soul."
BYRON'S CAIN.

FROM the time of his sending the letter to Hagar, Raymond Withers had renewed his search after Rosalia Aguilar with augmented hope and zeal. For the result of his proposition to her he scarcely felt a doubt. Over that high and proud nature, which had bowed before no will beneath the Supreme, he had, through the power of her strong affections, ever held despotic sway. Now indeed he had undertaken a more difficult task, to set in antagonism the two strongest, fiercest passions of her soul, to oppose her motherly love to her wifely affection; and though even by her maternal fears he should fail to extinguish her conjugal love, at least to silence the cry of its claims—to subdue the wife by the mother. But Raymond Withers was soon to learn that he had not sounded the depths, measured the extent, or tested the strength of the soul he wished to subdue; and how a few months of peace and stormy struggle and suffering had revolutionized her nature; that the tempest into which he had lashed her strong soul had only revealed from what an abyss the waves rolled up in their mighty power, and then subsided into passionless and profound calm; that the conflagration he had kindled in her high heart had only served to consume the dross and leave it pure and cool.

It was while waiting with great impatience to receive letters from two opposite quarters of the world, namely, from Hagar at the Heath, and from Captain Wilde at Constantinople, and while expecting with extreme anxiety to hear news from that terra incognita, the retreat of Rosalia, that he received in a packet of despatches from the State Department, a letter from Hagar.

"Now then!" exclaimed Raymond Withers, as he hastened to his own chamber, and shutting himself up in its privacy, broke the seal of the letter, running his eyes eagerly over its contents—they were as follows:

"WASHINGTON CITY, Oct. 15th, 182-.

"DEAREST RAYMOND:—Your letter, with all its insanities, is lying before me. I received it two weeks since at Heath Hall, I reply to it from my present residence, Washington City. Yes, I have left Heath Hall for many years' absence and wanderings perhaps, and this city is only my transient home: passing over the reasons and the objects of this course, I will come at once to the subjects more interesting to your heart than any chance of time or tide that may happen to me can be now, unless indeed such chance should remove me from the world, which would be 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' you think, in your present state of mind. Passing also over all that is false in your letter, through all that is superficial in your nature, I lay my hand upon your naked heart and assert that it does not cherish one single suspicion of my purity, that no man in earth or in hell could infuse there one single doubt of my fidelity, because I am true—that is truth—real in your convictions as in my experience, and that truth will bind us together, that truth will bring you back to me. You once told me that during your long and frequent absences before our marriage, you trusted—to me—the spirit that even in the form of an infant attracted, fascinated, and delighted you—and until passion subverted my reason, and your soul was drowned in voluptuousness, raised us both as one almost to Heaven. How high, how godlike you appeared to me then, Raymond; aye, in very truth the image of God; your tone could still the wildest tumult, your glance subdue the fiercest tempest that ever arose in my stormy bosom.

"You told me that then you had trusted *in* me, not *out* of me; *in* me, for our future union and joy. I quote your own words to assure you that you may *now* trust *not out* of me, but *in* me, for our *final* reunion and happiness. Your faith in me will save you, Raymond; will make you whole, will redeem you, will bring you back. Does this seem strange language to you, and wide of the subject of your letter? So must ever the words of truth and soberness seem to one bereft of his reason—as you are now—and how can one reply satisfactorily to the ravings of insanity! *You* are insane, Raymond, as ever your father was in a different way; his insanity was derangement of the brain, yours a disorder of the heart; his madness was mental aberration, yours is moral illusion. Ah, Raymond! how much more frequent, how much more horrible, how much more dangerous is moral than mental insanity! and how much more heavily visited of man, however it may be met by God! You are insane, Raymond! yes, brainsick, as well as heartsick *now*; and in your delirium you would exact that which I must not give you, and you threaten to visit an awful vengeance on my head if I do not comply with your demands. I am smiling, Raymond! smiling to recall a scene between a slight and fair-haired youth and his father in one of his fits of lunacy; the figure of the lunatic stood up, tall, dark, and threatening; the youth had dispossessed him of a razor, with which he was about to cut his own throat 'Give it me! or I will tear your heart out!!' yelled the madman, stamping and shaking with fury, while flakes of foam started from his lips. The beautiful boy stood before him pale, calm, and resolute; with that spirit of indomitable firmness, of invincible courage, piercing strongly, steadily through the soft fire of his eyes, keeping his gaze fixed upon the lunatic, until the mighty force of his *sane* soul cast out the devil, and subdued the 'embodied storm' before him! Do *you* remember that scene, Raymond? I was an infant of seven years old then; but, oh! how my soul worshipped that sublime boy! How my spirit, that soured proudly above every other sublunary authority, bowed before that god-like boy! But now that lofty soul is itself struck down, that fine spirit wounded, that great heart inflamed, fevered, delirious, and soars in its phrensy for a weapon of self-destruction, which I will as soon give, Raymond, as you would have yielded to the demands and threats of the madman the razor that you withheld at the imminent peril of your life. Ask me for a divorce a year hence, when you are sane, Raymond, and I will give it to you—for I would not hold an unwilling mate—no, my God! my whole soul recoils from the idea; but I cannot *now* obey you, Raymond; painful and humiliating as it is to me, as it *must* be to me to refuse you this! and more than that, disregard your *alleged* reasons, and addressing myself to your consciousness, reply to your *real* motives.—You do not wish to be free from your matrimonial engagements for the cause you have expressed; namely, a doubt of my fidelity—no, Raymond! you trust in my honor as you believe in God!—No, Raymond; there was an even stronger motive, if such could be, for your wish. In the whole course of your letter you did not once mention the name of your *compagnon-du-voyage*, Rosalia Aguilar; yet was *she* the Alpha and Omega of your thoughts! Come! I can think, speak, and write

Digitized by Google

of her very calmly now. You wish to marry Rosalia. Why, Raymond, you will tire of her in a year, even if she lives. She is a sweet and lovable girl, yet you do not love her as you *have* loved and *will* love me. You will sicken of her sweetness as a child sickens of a surfeit of honey. You will loathe her very charms and graces, her lovely and artless smiles and tones and gestures—that very melody of motion which entrances you *now*—as only a voluptuary *can* loathe the poor beauty that he has humbled and grown sick of. And were you married to her then, why then there would be *another* deserted wife, and where would it stop? Forgive me that I speak to you so, Raymond—it costs me much pain—much more pain than it costs you. To take this tone towards you humbles *me* in my own estimation, more than it can you. I cannot bear to look at you with any but an upraised glance. Alas! to see you *now*, I have to look down with veiled eyes. Rise, Raymond, rise! I want to see you aloft! my heart *needs* to worship, as it *must* always love—*must*, Raymond! annihilate my soul, and the last spark that will go out will be its love.

"I said that you would tire of that poor girl in a year *if she lives*, but she will *not* live, Raymond; the tempest of passion that you have raised in her tender bosom, the hell of remorse that you have kindled in her gentle soul will destroy her; she will not survive the loss of her purity one year. I do not know what she feels, how she looks now, but I know that she had frightfully changed even before she left the Rialto, before she guessed what I even *then* knew. But *you* know how she looks, you, perhaps, see the rose you have plucked and bruised for its fragrance, withering in your hands. You see her dying before you, and you fancy that if you could marry her she would be at peace, get well and live. You think you could cure a conscience-stricken soul by satisfying a conventional law. But such would not be the case, nor can I now obey you in this matter of a divorce. Ask it of me this day twelve-months, or any day thereafter, and I will do it. I pledge myself to that. Ask it of me sanely, honestly, dispassionately, and I will do it. Could I then hold you bound, if you wished to go? No! though my heart strings are your only fetters, I will snap them to free you.

"But you will not ask me to do this *when you come to yourself*. I look for this result, confidently, as I expect the storm now beating against my windows to cease, and the moon to shine out; quietly, as I watch for the night now hanging over the earth to vanish before the rising sun; patiently, as I wait for this cold, dreary winter to pass away and the spring to come back. The storm in *my* bosom has subsided, the night also of my soul is passed. I have suffered and outlived the greatest sorrow a human heart could feel, the worst is over, and my existence is now a winter day,

"'Frosty but kindly.'

I am very quiet now; do you wonder at this, and that I write to you so calmly—I who was an embodied whirlwind, so coolly—I whom you called incarnated lightning! Listen, Raymond—the carriage-wheels that carried you away, seemed to have rolled over my bosom, crushing it nearly to death. I felt the crush distinctly as any other physical agony—the dividing crush of flesh and muscle, nerve and sinew, while with a sharp cry I rolled over like a divided and quivering worm. I was picked up by Mrs. Collins, who asked me what was the matter. I told her that, lying in your path, an obstruction, your carriage had passed over my body, cutting it in two; that one half, with my heart, was dragged away with the wheels. They put me to bed, and said that I was delirious—sent for a doctor, who bled, blistered, and drugged me. I was ill a very long time. I moaned and laughed, prayed and blasphemed by turns; they said that I was mad, but I was not, not for one moment. Ah! if I had been mad, I should not have raved so! for what in all the imaginings of insanity could equal the horrors of my real experience, my sane consciousness? When my veins seemed running fire—when I burned and burned, and held up my hands to see why they did not fall to pieces in cinders and white ashes, consuming as they were in a dry heat. That 'lake of fire and brimstone!' it was within and around me! Often I threw myself out of the bed as out of a pit of coals, and in my strong agony grasped and tore at the floor like one shot through the heart might do. Oh! what a rack existence was then! I wished to take vengeance on all who had a hand in giving me life—God and my parents. Suddenly in the midst of that horrible feeling, I was struck with its awful blasphemy, penetrated with the truth of God's goodness and mercy—lastly of his omnipotence; and then falling again out of my bed, I rolled upon my face on the carpet and implored God in mercy to take back the life He had given, the life that was consuming fire—to give me the profound repose of non-existence—and if this prayer was sinful, at least to annihilate the *hell* in my heart. And now, Raymond, for a strange experience. As I prayed all things seemed changing around me—the air seemed stirred with angel wings, I could hear their hushed flapping as they waved a delicious cold dampness that seemed to cool my fevered and burning frame while it solicited sleep; and all this time my heart's wild hot throbs were subsiding coolly, while it filled and filled as a reservoir with peace; and every influence around me said gently, lovingly, 'Sleep, sleep,' and the hot stringency of my eyelids was loosened, and they fell cool and moist over the burning balls. And I slept and dreamed, a dream of infancy—it seemed to me that I lay across grandmother's dear, soft lap, that it was summer and she was fanning me, while a delicious coolness ran through all my veins, and filtered through all my flesh, exhaling vapor-like from the pores of my skin, as I felt myself luxuriously sleeping, breathing, and growing. Then came unconsciousness—and then I woke up renewed, the fever and the agony were gone, I was so cool, so quiet, that but for an aching, throbbing nerve in the centre of my heart I should have thought that I was happy; some element was gone, the fangs of the serpent seemed to have been withdrawn, the vulture had taken wing and left my heart to grow; this was only a pause in the torture, like an interval of repose in travail. Soon your letter came; and, your letter written just on the eve of departure, and it cast me back into the fire, and the same suffering was undergone again. But the same relief came at last. I was getting well. I was up, though scarcely able to stand or to speak, and quivering all over like the recoiling muscles of a torn off limb, when Gusty May came to see me, and the shock of his arrival threw me back a third time into death and hell, for I saw that *he knew all!* that killed the last faint lingering hope I had. It was during this third and worst relapse, that the executions were levied on your property. Well, Raymond, I recovered of this attack also! but it was not until I reached Heath Hall, and until after my third child, our boy, was born, that my health was fully re-established. I am in high health, now, Raymond! and cool, composed, cheerful, strong, and mistress of myself. The storm of hail and snow that was raging with fury when I commenced this letter, has passed, and the moon is shining bright, full, and clear as a mammoth diamond, and glistening on the silvery snow, its beams fall on my paper and around my head like a halo, a benediction of God, a promise of happier and holier days. Farewell for the present, Raymond; my home and heart are ever open for your return. I do not love you too fiercely now, Raymond, for I have all eternity to love you in. You are not just now my Raymond, but I am now and ever thy

HAGAR."

It was curious—the effect of this letter upon Raymond Withers. The first page he had perused with a frowning brow—opening the sheet with a twitch, the second page he read with many a "pish!" and "pshaw!"—the third was conned over with a softening countenance, and at the end of the fourth and last he exclaimed—"What the devil sent that infernal temptation across my path?—poor Hagar!" And then holding the letter behind him, he paced slowly up and down the room, with his head bowed upon his chest, while remorse, tenderness, disappointment, and regret, mingled in the expression of his once serene countenance. This was strange in the fact, but natural in the circumstances. His affection for Hagar had engaged his whole soul. She was one to be loved long, as well as deeply; her unique beauty, brilliant intellect, and high spirit, from her very childhood, had supplied to him an inexhaustible subject of occupation, interest, and amusement—she had met and satisfied every want of his nature. It was impossible, with her strong and ardent temperament and ever-varying emotions, that she could become flat and uninteresting. His passion for Rosalia was another matter, a mere delirium of the senses, a moral insanity, as Hagar had at last understood and described it to be, and as he

Digitized by Google

himself now knew it to have been—to *have been*—for this passion, stimulated and increased as it had at first been by her flight, by her continued absence, was already receding into the past. Raymond Withers was too much of a sensualist, and his love for Rosalia too much an affair of the senses to last long after she was lost to sight and hearing; therefore for many weeks past his passion had been declining, slowly, almost imperceptibly, but it was reserved for Hagar's letter to reveal to him the true state of his heart. Now he felt that his search for Rosalia had of late been conducted from the habit of looking for her until he should have found her, from a fear that she was lost, had perished by exposure, and from a remorse not to be shaken off while her fate was enveloped in mystery. He was conscious now, especially after reading Hagar's letter, that he was more anxious to hear of Rosalia's safety than even to see her—and the more he pondered upon this subject, the more convinced did he feel that he no longer desired her presence. A strongly setting-in tide of returning affection for Hagar filled his bosom to the expulsion of every other love—an affection purified by repentance, softened by pity, and elevated by respect. It was strange how slowly, imperceptibly, but how thoroughly he had come to his senses. He read Hagar's letter over again, and sighed many times during its perusal, and sometimes paused and held it on his knee while he tried to recollect the atrocities of his letter to her, and endeavored to persuade himself that it was not quite so diabolical as he knew it to have been. He arose and walked up and down the floor, with his hands holding the letter clasped behind him, and his head bowed upon his breast—deeply perplexed; and then he went up to the full length mirror that stood at one end of his luxurious dressing-room, and contemplating his elegant figure and really dazzling style of beauty, wondered impulsively if Hagar would not be very glad to get him back upon any terms; and then feeling ashamed of his thought, he resumed his walk, deeply congratulating himself that they had been preserved from the last degree of guilt, and that at least the door was at all times open for a man's return to duty, however sternly it might be barred against a repenting woman, and at that thought, again he thanked God that Rosalia Aguilar had been snatched from him, before she had fallen to the lowest stage of crime. But where *was* Rosalia? Ah! that was the thorn that rankled most; but there were others—how should he write to Hagar until she was found? and in what terms should he write?—how apologize for that "infernal letter," as he called it, as he tried to recollect that it was not quite so bad as he remembered it to have been, and then, whither should he direct his letter? Where would it be likely to find her? Hagar was on the wing; at this last thought, he experienced a satisfaction in the reflection that here was something at last on her part to find fault with—she had no right to roam up and down the world without having previously informed him of her views and intentions, and obtained his approbation and consent. He tried to convince himself that this was an infringement of his rights, a rebellion against his authority; it was a useless effort—his heart and reason acquitted her of all blame, and he was left to support his own load of guilt, remorse, and shame, unsustained by any counterbalancing sin on her side.

He was conscious of a vague but strong desire that Hagar might fall into some imprudence, misery, or disgrace, from which he might have the honor of rescuing her, so that he might be entitled to her gratitude and respect, and so approach her with some remnant of self-respect. The idea of going to her in any other character than that of protector, benefactor—to receive her love upon any other terms than those of honor, esteem—oh! this was too humiliating, and not to be thought of. He did not want her generosity, magnanimity, forgiveness; oh! nothing of the kind—the idea repulsed, revolted him—he would nothing of the sort—no, he must have her love, coupled as it had been with the high respect reaching almost to adoration, such as she had yielded him as his due even from her infancy up. He felt that it was no small thing to have held the sovereignty over Hagar's high spirit, and that it was no small humiliation to have lost it by his folly.

There was now a strong attraction and as strong a repulsion about the idea of Hagar—the most tantalizing that could be conceived, and that chained him to the rack. Her letter had struck away, as by the stroke of a strong arm, all that stood between them, and he saw her in all her beauty, in her fearful but fascinating beauty!—he desired of all things on earth to seek her, and could scarcely restrain his impatience; but he could not go, it seemed impossible. True, she had written, "My heart and home are ever open for your return," and though no word of *penitence* might be spoken by him, no tone of *pardon* breathed by her, yet the *thought*—the *fact*, would exist in the experience of both, and the *humiliation* for him—he could not dare it, or bear it! The difficulties that obstructed his return to Hagar, all growing out of his own bosom as they did, only provoked by opposition his strong desire to see her. He might now with more truth than formerly have written her down, "Hagar, mine only one;" for now it seemed that there was but "one Hagar in the universe." After the manner of all awakened sinners, how he deplored his sin!—after the manner of all restored maniacs, how he cursed his folly!—yea, after the manner of all sobered drunkards, how he blushed for his degradation! And could he appear before Hagar in that guise? before Hagar in her recovered and greatly increased strength and pride? Days passed, and the strongly turning stream of feeling was increased in force and volume by every circumstance and every thought. Still he continued uneasy upon the account of Rosalia; still extremely desirous of hearing from Captain Wilde; but, higher, deeper, and broader—covering all these, was the thought of Hagar. Ah, God! the more he contemplated it, the more alarming it became.

Hagar, not quite twenty years old, young, yet strong, high-spirited, audacious, proud of *herself*, apart from social position or the estimation of others—of Hagar, beautiful, piquant, and provoking beyond every other woman he ever saw—of Hagar, ardent, enthusiastic, and impulsive—but, no! he could not receive the idea suggested by this last circumstance; he could not conceive

Digitized by Google

that his high-souled Hagar *could* become the victim of her ardent temperament. No, he believed as she had said, in her honor, as he believed in God. But some other man's sacrilegious eyes might covet *her* as he had coveted Rosalia—and she was human and might be tempted. At this thought Raymond sprang up from the sofa, upon which he had been reclining, with a sudden love and anger striving in his heart, as Hagar's irresistibly charming face, with its crimson cheeks and lips and eyes of splendid fire, flashed in upon his brain, as in the days of her highest glory.

"After all, she is mine—my *own*—I have not given her up *yet!* and never will—*never!* I will resist to the death any effort that may be made to tear her from my possession! Yes, Hagar, I may lose your heart, but I will even *slay*, rather than give you up. What right has she to leave her home and travel over the world exposing herself in this manner? and where does find the means? I know that she travels with her family, for she would die rather than be severed from one of her children, and above all, what is her object? I should fancy that she were seeking me—God grant it!—I could face her, if she humbled herself to seek me—but no, she will never do that. No, if I ever hope to possess Hagar again, I shall have to *woo* her again."

He was interrupted in the midst of his confused thoughts by the entrance of his page, who brought him the post-bag: emptying it, his eye fell upon a letter directed in the hand-writing of Sophie Wilde. The letter bore date two months back; it had evidently been detained on its passage. It was short, nearly illegible, and evidently written in the most excruciating anguish of mind. It ran thus:—

"CONSTANTINOPLE, Oct. 1st, 182-.

"DEAR RAYMOND:—The receipt of your letter, with its most terrible intelligence, made me ill; so ill that for three weeks I have not been able to rise from my bed, and so could not, before this, answer it. Captain Wilde was not with me at the time of its receipt, and is not here now. I had no one but foreigners around me—so that there was none to act as my amanuensis, even had I been capable of dictating. In the name of God, where is Rosalia? I have been looking, and am still looking with anxiety, daily, for another letter from you, telling me that she is found. A thousand fears and anxieties torture my breast. Tell me, did she form any ill-judged attachment on her voyage out?—and was any one else missing when she went? Tell me why did you not write daily to keep me advised of your progress towards the discovery of her fate? Raymond, I can scarcely hold you blameless! I require her at your hands! never face me again without Rosalia's insured safety! Yet, how cruel in me to write to you thus; to you, who must be severely afflicted at her loss. Oh, Raymond! you do not know how much right you have to be so! You are the nearest, the only relative, she has on earth! I have lately received, and now possess, incontestable proof of what I am about to reveal to you:—*Rosalia Withers is your own sister, Raymond!*—the daughter of both your parents——"

He read no further; the paper fell from his stiffening fingers; a mortal sickness, *nausea*, seized him, horror swam in upon his brain, and barely murmuring—

"Oh, my God! what a sink of crime and infamy I have narrowly escaped!" he fell forward upon his face!

CHAPTER XL.

HAGAR'S RESOLVE.

"Once more alone—and desolate, now, for ever
In truth the heart whose home was once in thine:
Once more alone on life's terrific river,
All human hope, exulting I resign.

"Alone I brave the tempest and the terror,
Alone I guide my being's fragile bark,
And bless the past with all its grief and error,
Since Heaven still bends above my pathway dark.

"At last I taste the joy of self-reliance;
At last I reverence calmly my own soul;
At last I glory in serene defiance
Of all the wrong that would my fate control."

FRANCES S. OSGOOD.

I MUST remind you that Hagar, after reading her husband's letter, had fallen into a reverie that terminated in a resolve. It was inspired by a reflection upon her position and circumstances. She had three children, be it remembered, and all under three years old. She had no visible means of supporting herself and these children, for whom especially she wished to procure every comfort and every luxury that was desirable. She had drawn out the little balance left with his banker by Raymond Withers, and had used the greater part of it in paying her debts contracted with Gusty May; and what remained went to defray the expenses attending her last accouchement. She had nothing left. Winter was approaching, and the winters at Heath Hall, from its remarkably bleak and exposed situation, as well as from the ruinous state of the building, were felt very severely. Her own and her children's wardrobe was becoming very much the worse for wear, and it was highly necessary that it should be replenished. In fact, poverty, absolute want, was staring Hagar in the face. It was proper that something should be done to supply her necessities before they became importunate. It was too late in the season now to apply to her husband for relief, even if she could have bowed her pride to do so. A letter could not reach him and its reply come to her before the spring. What should she do? To remain at Heath Hall through the winter was impossible. Little as the place *looked* to be changed, every cold and windy day and every rainy day proved that no room in the house was weather-tight. When it rained the water streamed down into the very best room, as though it would set the carpet afloat. In cold weather it was even worse—the air poured in from all quarters, and no quantity of fire could warm the rooms. Tarquinius asserted with great truth, that to make a fire in the parlor was like trying to heat "all out of doors." I should say, that from the bleakness of its situation the winter came a month sooner and remained a month later at the Heath, than at any other place within the same latitude.

On that particular morning, when Hagar sat at the breakfast-table cogitating, it was cold and frosty everywhere, but it was *very* cold and bleak at Heath Hall; and the old lady whom Hagar had engaged as a companion, leaving the table and seating herself before the immense blazing hickory fire, declared that while her knees were scorching off, her back "friz." Ha-

Digitized by Google

gar at first thought of disposing of some of her most salable property—these were her piano and harp; they might be sold in the neighborhood at about a tenth of their value; but how long would the money hold out in supplying the necessities of her family? and what was to be done when it was gone? Hagar next wondered if there were nothing she could herself do for a living; but she was forced to reject every plan that presented itself. Was it needle-work? How should *she* live by her needle, who had not sufficient knowledge of that branch of industry to serve her in making and repairing her own wardrobe? Teaching? Ah! that was even *worse*. If to live by needle-work was difficult, to live by teaching was impossible. Hagar's intellect was like her own favorite forest haunts, strong, vigorous, and brilliant, but wild, tangled, and uncultivated. She had especially laughed Lindley Murray's grammar out of countenance, asserting that she could never comprehend it, and as for arithmetic, she refused to *try*—so that in these two highly "important branches of a good English education," Hagar was wofully deficient, but far too honest to attempt to teach what she did not know. Still her thoughts recurred to her piano and harp, and it was while thinking of their sale that it occurred to her that she was in possession of one splendid and unemployed talent—and the sudden thought sent a thrill of joy through her heart, as she blessed God for the gift and for the present inspiration.

She recollected hearing Raymond often say that her voice was admirably suited for concert practice—that he had heard all the celebrated singers of the day, and had never heard a voice or an execution like hers. She recollected to have heard that professional singers frequently made large fortunes. She remembered also hearing that several of these *artistes* were deeply respected for the virtue and even for the piety of their private lives. There was nothing in Hagar's pride to prevent her from embracing this career—her pride was strictly *personal*. She could not have been proud of her descent, of wealth, had she possessed it, of social position, or of any other external circumstance whatever—but she was proud of herself, that self that came alone into the world, and would go alone out of it. Hagar quickly decided upon her course. She was not one to renounce all the comforts, refinements, and elegances of life that had grown into a habit and a necessity, without an effort to retain them, and which she must resign without this or some equally lucrative plan of life. To this career she was drawn by her peculiar taste and genius; this would give her an opportunity of seeing that "world" so attractive to her eager and inquiring mind, and hitherto so completely hidden from her. In five minutes from the first inspiration of the idea, Hagar had laid out and matured all her plans. She determined, on her own responsibility, to have a sale and dispose of all her personal property that could be got rid of at any price, and with the proceeds to take her children and remove to Washington or Baltimore, and in one or the other of those cities to employ her musical talent in the most profitable manner. While thinking over these matters, and before rising from the table, she was startled by a rap at the door, apparently given with the butt-end of a riding-whip. To her quick "Come in!" Gusty May opened the door, looking half savage in his shaggy, white, box greatcoat, leather leggings, and foraging cap, and carrying in his hands a brace of canvas-back ducks. This was the first time he had been at the Hall since his banishment thence. She started up gladly to welcome him.

"Good morning, Hagar! may I come in?"

"Oh, yes, dear Gusty!—I am so delighted to see you!" exclaimed she, with brightening eyes, extending both hands to him.

"Humph!—sight of me is good for sore eyes, ain't it?"

"Yes, indeed, Gusty, my best friend, why have not you been to see me all this dismal long time?"

"Why have not I been to see you?—come, that will do. What did you tell me the last time I was over here!"

"True! I recollect—I told you not to come again, unless you came with your mother, and I was right, Gusty; it was proper, both for *your* sake and for mine that this should be so; only just now, Gusty, surprised and pleased at seeing you, I forgot myself for an instant."

"Yes! well! I came over here this morning, and took the liberty, Hagar, of shooting a pair of ducks on your moor. The bishop has come down to confirm at the church next Sunday, tomorrow, you know, and I thought that I would like to carry mother a pair of ducks to help out with the dinner, as the old bishop is very fond of our canvas-back ducks, and so, Hagar, having bagged my game, I could not pass the Hall like a poacher, without looking in."

"I am glad to see you, Gusty, notwithstanding all that I have said—do not I look so?"

"Oh! yes, dear Hagar," said Gusty, now for the first time seating himself in a chair near the fire, and setting his hat upon one side, and the pair of ducks on the other.

"We caught—at least Tarquinius did—a fine drum yesterday evening; it is more than we shall use in a week, won't you take half of it over to the cottage, Gusty?"

Gusty mused a moment, and then replied—

"No! I be hanged if I do, Hagar! You are very good, and *I* thank you, but the inmates of Grove Cottage have used you too badly, Hagar! God forgive me for remembering and repeating it; but they have not deserved the slightest favor from your hands, Hagar!—I do not know how you can forgive them!"

"See here, Gusty!" said she, laying her small hand affectionately on his arm, "they acted as their nature made it necessary for them to act, and their conduct does not grieve or anger me in the least; perhaps it inspires some contempt—but no, I take that back, for your sake, Gusty, and I assure you that their treatment gives me no pain. It is only those whom I love that possess any power over me, to torture me! if *you*, Gusty, had turned rascal on my hands, that circumstance would have caused me some suffering—but people I care little about! nonsense!"

"It is *my mother*, though!" said Gusty, with a look of deep distress.

"Yes, it is *your mother*, poor boy! Never mind, Gusty, take heart; she *is* an excellent woman for all; and not the less so because she cannot comprehend *me!*"

Digitized by Google

"Don't let us talk any more about it, please!" said Gusty, with a look of deep humiliation.

After a few minutes Gusty arose to go, saying, in an imploring voice, as he put on his hat and took up his ducks—

"Hagar, if I can *ever* be of any sort of service to you, for the Lord in Heaven's sake, *do* let me know, will you?"

Hagar mused a moment, and then replied—

"You *can* be of great service to me, Gusty!"

"Ah! can I? Tell me how? where? when?" exclaimed Gusty, gladly, dropping his ducks, doffing his hat, and reseating himself.

"Not now, this is Saturday; come over and spend Monday evening with me, and I will tell you."

"Thank you, Hagar, thank you for this mark of confidence. I will certainly come. Good-by, dear Hagar."

He caught her hand, shook it heartily, and left the house. Even that day Hagar employed with the preliminaries of her preparations. Gusty May was faithful to his appointment, and Monday afternoon found him at Heath Hall. Hagar's tea-table was waiting, and the old lady, her companion, was with her. She invited Gusty to take a seat at the board, and immediately after tea, when they had turned their chairs to the fire, and the old woman had left the room to put the children to bed, Hagar imparted her plan of public singing to Gusty. He was surprised, even to astonishment. Not understanding the nature of Hagar's pride, he had deemed her *too* proud for this career, and even ventured to hint that such had been his impression. Hagar smilingly disabused him of this erroneous idea; and then he hastened to say that as far as he himself was concerned he heartily approved of her plan, and pledged himself to do everything in his power to promote her object. The assistance she required from him was very slight, being only to act as her agent in the sale of several articles of her property. She requested him also not to reveal to any one her purpose in leaving the neighborhood. "Not that I care a great deal about it, Gusty, though I do not wish for ever to be on the lips of the gossips of Churchill's Point, but, because," said she, smiling archly, "it will be such a charity to afford Mrs. Gardiner Green and her *clique* a subject of speculation, that will keep their tongues for some time off some poor unfortunate, who might otherwise have been their next victim, and also, because this racking and unsatisfied curiosity will be such a well merited punishment of their slandering propensities!"

Gusty freely promised that he would not betray her confidence, and soon after took his leave. In a fortnight from this time, Hagar's preparations were all complete. It was a glorious day in October, when, with her three children, she stepped aboard a packet bound up the bay to the mouth of the Potomac River and to Washington City. She had left Heath Hall as she had found it—namely, in the care of Cumbo and Tarquinius. She had not engaged a nurse or a waiting maid in the country, because she wished to cut off for the present all trace of her course, and to sink for at least a year or two to come, her old in her new existence. After mature deliberation she decided that Washington and Baltimore were both too near home for the commencement of her professional labors. An invincible repugnance kept her from the North, where she had taken her first lessons in suffering. Merely staying long enough in Washington to procure a nurse and a travelling maid, she turned her steps southward. It was under a *nom de guerre* that Hagar Withers commenced her brilliant professional career at New Orleans in the year 182–. Every one who lived in that city at that time remembers the splendid concerts of Mrs. ———, a lady as remarkable for the stern asceticism of her private manners as for the brilliant success of her public career. Hagar's greatest motive in entering upon this profession had been to achieve by the only means in her power an independence, and she had made a stern resolution of reserve, self-denial, and solitude, as the only way of preserving her from falling into her besetting sins of [illegible]ldness and reckless gaiety, and towards which everything in her present life would conspire to draw her.

Once or twice before taking the final step that was to place her so conspicuously before the world, while doubtful of the light in which her extremely fastidious husband might look upon this when it came to his knowledge, and while an instinct of *family* pride, a rare thing with Hagar, prompted her, she thought, that she would do better to become a private teacher of music; but the idea was so repulsive that she quickly shrank from it. Her *personal* pride, her independence, would suffer too much in this latter position. Her prejudices, the very few with which her mind was trammelled, were all against the profession; and that circumstance, taken with her unprotected condition, and the experience she had gained by the gossiping propensities of her old neighbors at Churchill's Point, had fixed her firmly in the resolution she had formed, namely, of isolating herself with her young family during the hours not devoted to her public professional duties. Her winter at New Orleans was one chain of splendid successes, each more brilliant than the last. In the spring of 182–, she, still accompanied by her babies as a guard of cherubim, sailed from New Orleans for Havre, intending to make a professional tour of Europe for one year before returning to her native country.

"Mother!" said Gusty May to Mrs. Buncombe, as they sat together in the parlor at Grove Cottage, a few days after Hagar's departure from Heath Hall, "what do the good folks about here say of Hagar now?"

"All that I have heard speak upon the subject, say that they are very glad she is gone to her husband—*if he can receive her*. And I am glad also. It has been a grief to me to absent myself from Hagar; but, really, you know, Gusty, she had cost me already too much, in your misfortunes.—I could not risk compromising my own position by her."

"It was not her fault, mother. But I am thinking of the wonderful charity of the folks in putting such a kind construction upon Hagar's journey; strange they had not thought of accusing her of eloping with the captain of the packet in which she sailed! 'Pon honor, I shall begin to have some hope for the people of Churchill's Point yet!" said Gusty, really sur-

Digitized by Google

prised at the explanation they had given of her journey.

"Hagar has given room for talk by getting into an anomalous position; why *should* people find themselves in inconceivable situations? *I* never did, yet I was an unprotected girl."

Gusty looked at her in grave perplexity, divided between his wish to defend Hagar and his reverence for her; at last he said, smiling sadly—

"Dear mother, Lewis Stephens, poor fellow! was drowned last summer, in a gale of wind!—Now, why *should* people be drowned in a gale of wind? *I* never was, and *I* have been in a gale of wind!"

"Gusty, *hush!* you talk like—like a young man."

"And if I am to talk differently, I hope to God I may never live to be an old one."

"I deserve this from you, Gusty!" said his mother, with the tears welling up to her eyes.

Gusty's arms were around her neck in a moment.

"Dear mother, forgive me! I meant no disrespect to you, indeed; but it is *so* trying to see one of your excellent heart, so uncompromising to Hagar, for whom I have, God knows, a higher respect, deeper esteem, than for the whole world besides."

While they were conversing thus, the door opened, and Mr. Buncombe entered the parlor, and throwing a letter into his wife's hand, exclaimed—

"Well, here is the long-looked-for come at last!"

It was a letter bearing a foreign stamp, and directed in the hand of Captain Wilde. Emily opened it hastily. Soon as she read, her face grew pale in consternation.

"What is it, mother?" asked Gusty, approaching her.

"What is it, dear Emily?" inquired her husband, leaning over her chair.

"I hardly know myself; oh, heaven!"

"Read it! tell us!" cried Gusty.

"No one ill, I hope?" whispered the parson.

"Rosalia is lost!"

"Lost!" exclaimed Mr. Buncombe, in astonishment.

Gusty sank upon a chair, his cheek turning white as death.

"Lost! fled!" gasped Emily, still gazing on the sheet before her; "fled no one knows wherefore or whither!"

"Inexplicable!" cried Mr. Buncombe.

Gusty was devouring his mother's face with h isgreat eyes.

"*Fled*, did you say—say *fled*, mother?"

"Fled, Gusty!" sobbed Emily, "fled, my poor, dear, unfortunate boy!—*fled*—fled from the protection of Mr. Withers the very afternoon of their landing at Genoa!"

Gusty jerked the letter out of his mother's hand impulsively, and forgetting to apologize, ran up stairs with it, while Mr. Buncombe set himself to soothe and comfort Emily, and to win from her an account of the flight of Rosalia, with which the reader is already acquainted. Both were thrown into the utmost consternation by the news. To them it was a mystery of rayless darkness, for so far from having cast any light upon the subject of the flight it had announced, Captain Wilde's letter expressed a faint hope that Emily might possess some clue to the fate of her adopted daughter.

At last Emily thought of Gusty, and was preparing to go and try to soothe the anguish she believed he must be suffering, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and Gusty ran in with his countenance and manner highly excited as by a strange joy, exclaiming, screaming, as he waved the letter in circles above his head—

"Hip! hip! hur-ra-a-a-a-a-a, mother! three times three *now*, mother! and special thanksgiving next Sunday, for this good, this great, this glorious news! Hurrah!"

"*Good News!* oh, my God, he is mad!" exclaimed Emily in extreme terror; "hold him, Buncombe!"

"Yes, hold him, Buncombe! hold him, Buncombe! lest in his joy he bound like a cannon ball through the roof of the house! Hold him, Buncombe!" yelled Gusty, jumping into the arms of the reverend gentleman, seizing him about the waist, and whirling him round and round the room in a brisk gallopading waltz! Shriek after shriek burst from Emily's terrified bosom, and brought all the household (being Kitty and a horse-boy) running into the room, just as Gusty had dropped the startled parson, and was standing panting with exertion, weeping for joy, and laughing for fun at the same time.

"Take him into custody! secure him! before he hurts himself or somebody else!" exclaimed Emily, palpitating.

"Take *who* into custody?" exclaimed Gusty, looking round, "what's done?"

"Oh, heaven! will nobody bind him?" sobbed Emily, edging towards her son, cautiously.

Gusty caught her to his bosom, and kissed her heartily, as he stooped and whispered breathlessly, his brain sobered a little by the alarm he had caused, but his heart still wildly throbbing with ecstatic joy—

"*Mother!* pshaw—*you* know me! I'll—I'll—perhaps I'll tell you why I'm overjoyed just presently; send all these gapers and starers away, and go and reassure his reverence, who, not being a fighting man, is bolstering himself up against the wall, not knowing what I am going to do next; there, *do*, mother! my blood is so unmanageable, it is getting up again! yes, here it comes! it's going to boil over! I declare it is! I can't help it! get out of my way! I won't hurt anybody! hip! hip! hurra!" and with that he bounded forward into the air, cut four or five capers more extravagant than the others, and ran from the room, leaving the assembled family dumb with astonishment.

Having reached his own room, Gusty began to empty his drawers, wardrobe, &c., and to pack his clothing into a sea-chest with great haste and zeal. While he was employed in this manner his mother came in, and tearfully sat down by him; seeing his occupation, a deeper shade of perplexity and anxiety came over her countenance, as she inquired:—

"And what are you trying to do now, my poor, deluded boy?"

Gusty took his hand out of his chest, and still resting upon one knee, assumed a look of profound composure, thinking doubtless that by this time his character for sanity was in serious danger, and replied,

Digitized by Google

"Ahem! hem! Mother, as it is now near the opening of the session of Congress, and many of my own and my uncle's professional and political friends are in Washington City, I think of going thither, and while they are on the spot, getting them to use their influence with the President to procure my reinstatement. You know, mother, this is the first good chance, because personal solicitation is so much more powerful than epistolary application."

Struck with the rationality of this reply, Emily was a little staggered in her opinion of his madness: however, she would try him further.

"But this is a very sudden resolution, Gusty!"

"Oh! I had been thinking of it for some days past, and the arrival of uncle's letter, and the reminiscences of our naval life that it awakened, you know, suddenly inspired me with a strong desire to return to it—wasn't that natural?"

"Oh, yes! and I am glad! I had feared that you would have held to your resolution, never to apply for reinstatement."

"Ah! that resolution was one of my hasty impulses, mother! times and *motives* have changed since then!" exclaimed Gusty, and he resumed his packing with renewed zeal.

"But why pack your sea chest, Gusty?"

"Why, mother, if I am reinstated, as I shall be, for my case is very strong, and the Hon. Chevy Chase, of New York, who lives near the Rialto, the scenes of my labors and sorrows, knows all about it, and is a friend of the President—if I am reinstated, of course, as usual, I shall immediately be ordered on active service, and shall need to be all ready."

"Nonsense, Gusty! take a change of linen in your valise, and go to Washington. I will prepare and pack your wardrobe and send it to you in a day or two, or as soon as you want it."

"Yes! that will be better! thank you, mother!" said Gusty, rising and seating himself on his trunk.

"And Rosalia!" sighed Emily, looking in his face, "what can have become of her, and how do you feel about her, Gusty?"

Gusty mused. He felt glad that he had never breathed to his mother a word of the elopement he had suspected; and now that its object had been defeated by Rosalia's flight, he could not bring himself to mention it. He felt very little fear of Rosalia's fate *now*. Her unexpected deliverance from evil at the last moment greatly strengthened his faith in her guardian angel, and Gusty had a great deal of faith, as we have seen. That Rosalia was somewhere in safety, and that she would make her retreat known as soon as she should hear of the arrival of any of her friends at Genoa, he fully believed; and it was his determination, in case of his being reinstated, to solicit orders on the Mediterranean service, and in any other case, to go out privateering in a search for the lost girl.

"Well, Gusty, what are you thinking of?" asked Emily at last.

"I am thinking, mother, that Rosalia is *safe*, and that we shall soon *hear* that she is so!" said he.

The next morning Gusty May set out for Washington City, where he arrived within the week. After a few weeks' petitioning, struggling, and delaying—during which Gusty's hopes fell and anger rose a dozen times at least—and during which his friends persevered while his own patience gave out—at "long last," Gusty May was duly authorized to mount the anchor and eagle buttons and epaulette, and empowered to write himself down, Lieut. Aug. W. May, U. S. N. He ran down to Churchill's Point to hug and kiss his mother upon this good news, and to get his chest, for he was ordered to join his old ship, the Rainbow, about to sail from Boston for the Mediterranean.

Within the month, Gusty was "Once more upon the waters."

CHAPTER LXI.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

"Once more upon the waters! yet once more,
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows its rider."

CHILDE HAROLD.

THE good ship Rainbow weighed anchor on the 1st of January, and bore away from Boston harbor before a fair wind. The voyage across the Atlantic ocean was rather tempestuous, but in due time the vessel passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and entered the Mediterranean, where she continued to cruise for some months, stopping at almost every other port but that Gusty May was so anxious to enter, namely, Genoa. Gusty had deluded himself with the fond idea that once in the Mediterranean he must come upon Rosalia Aguiliar *somewhere*. He had written to Captain Wilde, and had also swallowed his rage and compelled himself to write to Raymond Withers. He had not received a line in reply from either of them up to the 1st of April, at which time his ship was ordered to Constantinople. On the 15th of April they entered the Archipelago, on the 25th passed through the straits of the Dardanelles, and on the 1st of May entered the straits of Constantinople, and anchored among a thousand other ships of all nations before the City of Mosques and of the Sultan.

He inquired and found that Captain Wilde's ship, the Cornucopia, was still there, though expected to sail in a few weeks.

As soon as he could obtain leave of absence, he hastened in search of it. The ship lay opposite the lower part of the city. He found it and hurried on board. Captain Wilde was on deck, and hastened to receive his nephew—they met—clasped each other in a warm, fraternal embrace, and *both* exclaimed, in *one voice*,

"Rosalia! have you heard from Rosalia?" and each looked blankly and sadly at the other, as he murmured,

"No—I was in hopes that *you* could have given me news of her," and then the final answer was simultaneously spoken by both,

"Ah, *no!* all inquiries have been fruitless."

"How is my sister Emily?" asked Captain Wilde.

"Well in health; but dreadfully anxious about Rosalia, of course, as we all are," replied Gusty, with a deep sigh, "and Sophie—how is Sophie?"

"Not well—indeed very far from it; the

Digitized by Google

sudden news of Rosalia's flight, or abduction, for we do not know which to suppose it, threw her into a fit of illness, from which she has never fully recovered ?"

" Poor, dear Sophie—where is she now ?"

" Here on board the ship with me."

" HERE ! has she lived here all the time ?"

" Certainly."

" And through her long illness ?"

" Yes—do you not know that the Turkish Government will not permit a foreigner to reside in the city ?"

" And is there no exception to this rigid exclusion ?"

" None, even in favor of ministers of friendly nations ; *they* are not permitted to reside within the walls of the city."

" And Sophie is here—introduce me to her."

" Wait, my dear Gusty, a few minutes ; I must prepare her for your visit," and so saying, Captain Wilde went down into the cabin, whence he returned in a few minutes, saying,

" Come, Gusty ! Sophie expects you, and she has a strange story for your ear also."

Gusty followed his uncle down the gangway into a large cabin, fitted up in the most luxurious style. The berth or sleeping apartment, at the upper end, opposite the entrance or gangway, was concealed by curtains of purple velvet, fringed with gold, and festooned with golden cord. The side walls were wainscoted with mahogany, and the floor covered with a Turkey carpet, of colors so brilliant and life-like, and texture so yielding, that you seemed to be stepping upon flowers. In the centre of the cabin stood a rose-wood table made fast to its place, and above it hung a splendid chandelier of cut glass and gold. Ottomans covered with purple velvet and fringed with gold, like the curtains, were ranged around the walls upon the carpet.

A beautiful spring-bottomed sofa, whose upper cushions were of down, covered also with purple velvet to match the other hangings, was placed against the walls on the left hand as you entered, and facing it upon the opposite side, hung a large cheval mirror. About upon the walls hung several rare oil paintings in rich frames, and the rosewood table was littered with books.

" This is Sophie's own particular retreat," said Captain Wilde, as he introduced Gusty, and pointed him to a seat on the sofa. In a few seconds the purple velvet curtains opened, and Sophie entered. The very same Sophie, whom time seemed to forget to mar. The same little round looking figure, in its sober dress of brown satin, the same little sedate head with its simply braided, glossy brown hair, the same soft, pale face with its large, tender brown eyes, the same pensive countenance, and gentle manners, the same low sweet voice, the same every way except—yes ! there *is* a tone of deep, deep sorrow in her whole bearing as she approaches to greet Gusty, who rises and meets her more than half way. She offers her cheek to Gusty, who kisses it as he embraces her, and they look in each other's face with a heartbroken expression of countenance, and sit down without a word spoken on either side ! At last, trying to utter the name of Rosalia, Sophie chokes and bursts into tears, and weeps convulsively.

" Ah ! well—yes—this is it !" exclaimed Captain Wilde, sitting down and taking her in his arms, forgetting or disregarding the presence of Gusty, and muttering *sotto voce* as he soothed her, " I sometimes wish we could hear that this poor girl was dead, for then Sophie would know that she was in Heaven, and cease to break her heart about it."

Sophie wept abundantly, and, as a fit of free weeping always acts, it subsided and left her heart clear, her mind refreshed, and her nerves calm—*temporarily*—just as an April shower leaves, *for the time*, the sky bright, and the earth refreshed. Then as she recovered, she recounted all the little she knew from Raymond Withers of Rosalia's flight, and ended by reiterating that no news had been heard of her ; nor the slightest clue had been found to her fate or her retreat.

Gusty saw that neither Captain Wilde nor Sophie had the slightest suspicion of the elopement, well veiled as it had been ; and he, on his part, determined not to enlighten them. On his inquiring when they had last heard from Raymond, he was informed that they had received but one letter from him, namely, the letter announcing Rosalia's flight, but that they had lately heard, by a vessel direct from Genoa, that the American Consul was lying extremely ill of a brain fever, and that his life was despaired of.

" Of course that is the reason he has not written to us," said Sophie.

" And I suppose that is why he has not replied to my letter, either," observed Gusty.

Then Sophie asked her thousand-and-one questions about Emily and her family, about Heath Hall and its inmates, and about Hagar and her children. To all these questions Gusty gave satisfactory replies. When she inquired about Hagar he merely told her that she was in high health and beauty, and the mother of a fine boy, thus revealing only what was agreeable in the truth, without afflicting Sophie by saying one word of the sorrow of which it was evident that she had not the slightest idea. If this partial concealment was not in*genu*ous, it was at least in*geni*ous ; but I am not defending Gusty.

" I have something strange to tell you about our poor dear Rosalia, but I am not able to tell you to-day, Gusty," said Sophie.

" Is it about anything that has occurred since you parted with her ?"

" Yes—and—no," said Sophie, " but I am not strong enough for the task now. Come to-morrow, Gusty, and I will tell you—I must lie down now."

And indeed she looked so languid, so much as if about to faint, that Gusty, mentally reproaching himself for having stayed so long, arose to take leave.

" Come and dine with us to-morrow at five, if you can leave the ship," said Captain Wilde.

" Yes, do Gusty," added Sophie.

" I will, certainly, with great pleasure, if I can get off," replied Gusty ; and raising Sophie's pale and languid hand to his lips he turned and left the cabin, accompanied by Captain Wilde.

" Come in the morning for the story, however, Gusty, for Sophie is too feeble to be worried later in the day."

The next morning as soon as he was off duty, Gusty hastened on board the Cornucopia. Captain Wilde met him as before, and telling him that Sophie was ready to receive him, conducted

Digitized by Google

him into the cabin. Sophie reclined upon the sofa, but arose, and greeting Gusty, pointed him to the seat by her side. He took it, and after making several kind inquiries about her health, he awaited the revelation she had to make him—his interest and his curiosity whetted up to the keenest edge. At length she said—

"I suppose, Gusty, you are waiting for this story?"

"Yes, dear Sophie, with as much *im*patience as I dare to feel, seeing you so feeble."

"I am much stronger in the morning—well—dear knows, I hardly know where to commence, for I am no narrator. I suppose, Gusty, you always thought that Rosalia—poor Rose!—was my niece, did you not?"

"Of course—*yes!*

"My sister, Rosalia Churchill's child?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, she is not either the one or the other!"

"How?"

"She is no kin to me."

"SOPHIE!"

"It is true."

"You astound me!"

"So was I astounded when the fact was revealed to me."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Certain of it."

"Beyond a doubt?"

"'There is not a peg to hang a doubt upon.'"

"Who is she then, in the name of Heaven?"

"The daughter of my late husband, Mr. Withers, by his first wife—Fanny Raymond, and the sister of Raymond Withers!"

Gusty turned all colors, and lost his voice for a time; at last seeing that Sophie remained silent, he exclaimed—

"Great God! this cannot be true!"

"I *know* it to be true. I have incontestable proof that it is true."

"And does *he*—Raymond Withers, know this?"

"Yes, I presume so."

"And how long has he known it?" asked Gusty, with a strange joy breaking over his face.

"Only since her flight."

Gusty's countenance fell suddenly.

"Does *she* know or suspect it?"

"I presume not—poor child!"

"How long have *you* known it?"

"About eight months."

"And how did you discover it?—who told you?—and why has the fact been kept concealed so long?"

"Stay, Gusty, it was to tell you the whole story that I requested your visit this morning. I am about to do so."

"I am all attention—begin."

"In the first place, I do not wish to enter further upon the details of the early life of Mr. Withers than is absolutely necessary to make this story clear."

"Of course not," winced Gusty, with a countenance expressive of having bitten an unripe persimmon.

"You have sometimes heard the name of Fanny Raymond?"

"Yes—though long

"'Banished from each lip and ear,
Like words of wantonness or fear;'

—I *have* heard it—and I remember her sad fate."

"You will understand, then, why it is unpleasant to me to allude to her dark story."

"Yes, of course."

"Further than is positively unavoidable?"

"I know! I know!"

"Then these are the facts lately revealed to me by my deceased brother-in-law's attorney—and this was the manner of it. We had been out here something like four or five months, when I received a packet of letters and papers from Mr. Linton, my late brother-in-law's attorney, and my colleague in the guardianship of Rosalia and her little property. With this packet of letters came *one* letter, sealed and superscribed in a hand-writing, the sight of which made my heart leap to my throat—the hand-writing, in fine, of my only sister—my dead sister, Rosalia. In truth, it seemed like a missive from the grave. It was directed 'To Sophie Withers—care of T. Linton, attorney at law—to be delivered according to its address, on the 1st June, 182–.' *That was Rosalia's eighteenth birthday.*"

Sophie paused. Gusty waited in breathless impatience. She seemed strongly disinclined to recommence the recital that she had abandoned at the very outset.

"Well?" at last ventured Gusty—"Well, Sophie?"

"Alas! why have I to tell this story—I do so revolt from it, Gusty! I walk around and around it, fearing to approach it!"

"Don't then, Sophie," said Gusty, with an effort at magnanimity, but looking very anxious.

"Yes, I shall have to tell it—and may as well brace myself to the task now as at any other time. Listen then, Gusty, and I will endeavor to condense the story that was revealed to me through some half a dozen long letters, and proved by some half a score of tedious documents. You remember my sister Rosalia, Gusty?"

"Like one of the glorious visions of my morning of life—*yes.*"

"Yes, she *was* gloriously beautiful—of your Rosalia's complexion and style of beauty, but with a sparkling vivacity, flashing like sun-light through every look, and tone, and gesture—Rosalia Churchill's first effect upon a stranger was electrical. Well! soon after we were left alone by the death of our brother, Mr. Aguilar, a young merchant of Baltimore, came down to make or finish a large contract for tobacco, from Mr. Gardiner Green—he saw Rosalia at church on Sunday; on Monday got himself presented to her by Mr. Green, who brought him to the Hall. He came every day to see us. At the end of a week he returned to Baltimore, but came back in a few days. At last he proposed for Rosalia, married her, and carried her off to his city home. Rosalia was very young and very thoughtless, and perhaps her husband was a little selfish, and did not wish to be troubled by the poor country relations of his beautiful but penniless young wife—at least that is the only way in which I can account for the estrangement between us that followed her marriage. I wrote to my sister frequently, and at first her replies were copious, her letters filled with vivacious descriptions of gay city life—of

Digitized by Google

dress, visiting and receiving company—of balls, plays, and concerts, &c., &c., &c. This continued a few months, and then our correspondence began to die out. Her letters were short and few, and filled with apologies. I never remonstrated against this, because, you know, that is not my disposition. At last—and this was near the close of the second year—a longer interval of silence than usual followed my letter to her. I felt a *diffidence* in troubling her with two letters at a time, for I felt that she was a fine, fashionable lady, and just then I was almost a pauper."

"I guess it was your quiet *pride*, Sophie."

"I am no moral philosopher, and I do not know whether it was pride or humility that prevented me for some time from writing a second letter to her; but at last I grew so restless about her—I felt so interested in her domestic affairs—she had been married more than a year, and I was anxious to know whether she had a baby. Sometimes I thought she *had*, and that the care of it prevented her writing to me, so I wrote and asked her in so many words. Her reply came, after a long time. She told me she had a little snowy-skinned, golden-haired, sapphire-eyed girl, who was said to be the picture of herself. Of course I thought, naturally enough, that the child was her own. I could think nothing else. She had not *said* so, but could I infer anything else, Gusty?"

"Certainly not."

"You see she entered into no details except very minute ones about the baby's beauty, dresses, habits, and christening. This revived our correspondence for a little while—only for a little while—it died out, and finally ceased altogether. It was a year from this that I was married to Mr. Withers; and it was in the second year of my marriage that I was so unfortunate as to lose my only sister and her husband by the then prevailing epidemic. I was appointed by will, guardian, in conjunction with Mr. Linton, of the infant orphan, Rosalia, and was summoned to Baltimore, to receive her into my care. I went, and brought home the baby, Rosalia, without a single suspicion of who she really was. I was attracted to the child; I loved her, but not for anything of my sister that I saw in her, for there was really nothing. Superficial observers might fancy a likeness, because they both had the same snowy skin, tinged with a faint rose-color on the cheeks; the same glittering gold hair, and the same azure eyes; but to my searching eyes there was not a single look of my sister about her. There was a startling likeness to another—an unfortunate, whose strange sad fate was as incomprehensible to me as this child's alarming resemblance of her. Still—so far was I from suspicion—so little given, as you know, Gusty, to marvellousness or romancery, that I considered this extraordinary likeness as mere fancy in me, until Mr. Withers also remarked it, in great agitation, and even *then*, I set it down as accidental. Mr. Withers grew very fond of her, and she of him. She was the only one who could subdue the tiger in his heart during his fits of phrensy. You know we brought her up as our niece, and loved her so much that had we heard that she was the child of the bitterest enemy in the world, we could not have loved her any less. The panic caused by the extraordinary likeness passed away with years, because, in fact, as she grew up this resemblance declined, and her air and manner became assimilated to mine, so much so that people saw, even through the marked difference of complexion—what they called 'a family likeness' between two of no kin. Children *do* thus grow to resemble those who bring them up—in case they love them. I believed her to be my niece, and only regretted that she had not been my daughter. You may judge, then, with what surprise I received this packet of papers from my coadjutor, Mr. Linton, accompanied by his own letter—shall I read it to you, or tell you of its contents?'

"Is it long?"

"Yes."

"Well, tell me."

"Well then, listen; it appears that a few days before the death of Mr. Aguilar, he sent for his lawyer, T. Linton, and requested him to draw up a will, in which he left the remnant of his wrecked property to his wife Rosalia. Within a fortnight after the funeral of her husband, my sister was struck down by the epidemic to which he had fallen a victim. On the day previous to her decease she requested an interview with Mr. Linton. He obeyed her summons, and at her desire, drew up a second will, by which she bequeathed to *her daughter, Rosalia Aguilar*, all the property so lately devised to herself. She signed this will, and returning it to him, requested him to keep it *for exhibition to her relatives*, and to draw her up a copy, substituting the name of *Rosalia Aguilar Withers*, and to keep this in reserve, for, said she,

"'The *first* will, will not give her any right to the bequest, because she is not my daughter.'

"'Then why say so in the first will?' inquired the lawyer.

"'Because I do not wish to send the orphan, *orphaned* into the world. As my own child, my relatives will naturally receive Rosalia with affection—the *prestige* of family will be about her. As my adopted daughter, they may possibly look upon her with aversion as an interloper, who has deprived them of an inheritance. I do not say that it *will* be so, but I *do* say that this is so natural, so human a possibility, that I do not wish to risk it. I wish to cover my baby, my child; she *is* my child in affection, if not in love—I wish, I say, to shelter her with *love* during the years of her infancy and childhood, and during these years you must only produce the *first* will, unless the discovery of her real parentage makes it necessary to produce the second, which will secure to her the property under *all* circumstances. I have prepared a letter, in which I have given the history of my adoption of Rosalia Withers, and which I shall confide to you, to be delivered to my sister on Rosalia's eighteenth birth day, or before, if unexpected circumstances should make it proper to do so.' Well, she intrusted him with both wills, the real and ostensible one, and with the letter explanatory of the whole matter. Gusty, I am exhausted; shall I give you the letter to read, while I take a little repose?"

Gusty looked at Sophie—she was pale and trembling with nervous exhaustion.

"Oh! I am a brute! a brute! not to have noticed your fatigue; but I was so interested in

Digitized by Google

Rosalia—give me the letter, Sophie, and lie down."

"It will tell you all that you wish to know, Gusty," said she, rising, and handing him the letter.

He received it, and left the cabin, saying to himself, "Sophie is not so strong to endure as she was—her heart is breaking under reiterated blows." Passing Captain Wilde, and promising to be back to dinner, Gusty hastened to his own ship, and retired to read his letter, which, with its revelations, reader, shall be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LETTER.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive."
SCOTT.

GUSTY found himself in his own "caboose," and opened the letter. Its contents were as follows:

From Rosalia Aguilar to Sophie Withers.

"MY DEAR AND ONLY SISTER:—Long before your eye follows these lines, the hand that now traces them will have moulded into dust. I write now propped up in bed, and my pen drops from my hand, and my hand falls from the paper every instant—ah! how difficult to write with the life in my bosom palpitating, sinking, fluttering into death! yet I must write. There is a secret that I must leave revealed for you, although for awhile it will yet be kept from you. Hear my confession. There is a little child whom never having seen, you yet love from my description, and from her supposed relationship to you. And you must, for years to come, still believe in her kindred claim. That little girl is no child of mine—no relative of yours. Listen! this is her history.

"From the first year of my married life, I wished above all things for a child—but when, in the passage of time, I knew that Heaven had written me childless, I wished to *adopt* an infant—one without parents, friends, or relatives—an orphan from its very birth, whom I would make all my own—whom I could pass, not only upon the world, but upon my relatives, as my own; for I was morbidly sensitive upon the subject of my childlessness, and felt my misfortune to be a mortification of which I wish to keep even you ignorant. (Now, if I continue to keep even you in ignorance, it is from a less selfish motive, namely, the welfare of my adopted daughter.)

"Well, Sophie! such a child as I wished to find was not so easily to be discovered; but the more difficult the attainment, the more desirable was the object. I brooded over the plan continually. I used to drive in my carriage to alms-houses, orphan asylums, &c., and became a sort of amateur baby-fancier; only I never saw a baby that struck my fancy. I never betrayed even to the matrons of these institutions my secret purpose in visiting them so frequently. I thought it was quite time enough to make known my wishes when their object, namely an eligible child for adoption, should be found. I was in the habit of visiting these asylums at least once a fortnight, and I got the name of being very charitable, for I had to give alms to account for my visits. I grew quite into the confidence of the matrons and directors, although, living as I did, quite at the opposite end of the city, they knew nothing of me beyond my 'charities,' as they called them. One day, however, the matron of the almshouse met me at the door, and conducting me into the parlor, told me that she had a singular circumstance to reveal, and then gave me the following particulars. 'That late on the preceding night, a woman had been seen wandering bare-footed, and with wild eyes, streaming hair, tattered dress, and frantic manners, through the streets of the city. When accosted by passengers she would answer wildly, or turn and flee. At last, that morning, she was brought before a magistrate, who, seeing her lunacy, had her sent to this asylum.'

"'She was brought here about eleven o'clock,' continued the matron; 'she is a very remarkable looking young person, and I should think within a very few days of her confinement. Will you see her?' I assented, and followed the matron to the ward in which the stranger was placed. We entered a small room apart, and there I saw such a wreck of a human being! an extremely emaciated figure sitting doubled up on the foot of the low bed—from her thin limbs hung tattered raiment, bearing the marks and stains of much travel and exposure. Her elbows rested on her knees, and her talon-like hands supported her wan, white face, which formed a death-like contrast to the brilliant hair of mingled gold and silver threads that streamed down each side. Her eyes were strained out straight before her, but fell as she saw us. She was now enjoying—no, not enjoying, suffering a lucid interval. I saw it in the set despair—the too rational despair of those terrible eyes. I felt strongly and most painfully interested in her—I fully believed her to be one of the too numerous victims of trust and perfidy. I wished to talk to her—to learn, if possible, something of her history—to do, if possible, something to alleviate her sufferings. I could not, somehow, bring myself to speak to her confidentially in the presence of the matron. I fancied that if I were left alone with the poor stranger, I might win some information from her, and learn if I could in any manner ameliorate her condition. I requested the matron aside, to withdraw for a few minutes, to give me this opportunity. She did so, and I went after her, closed the door behind her and returned, drew the only chair in the room to the side of the bed, and sat down in it very near her. She was sitting in the same attitude—her side face was towards me—she did not notice me.

"'I am very sorry to see you looking so unhappy,' said I, softly as I could speak, and watching her face steadily.

"She did not reply, but I saw the blue lips spring quivering apart, and the white teeth glisten between them.

"'Are you married?' inquired I, after a long, painful pause.

"I immediately regretted my indiscreet question when I saw her turn her gaze haughtily upon me, while something like scorn kindled on her cheeks, writhed on her lips, flashed from her eyes, as she answered, in a low and measured tone,

"'Do you not *perceive* that I am married?'

"I felt humbled—like a repulsed intruder—still I did wish so much to benefit her that I ventured again.

"'Can I do anything for you?'

"'Yes!'

"'Tell me what?'

"'You can leave the room!'

"'I will do so,' said I, 'certainly, as I do not wish, upon any account to add to your discomfort,' and rising, I left the chamber.

"The matron met me in the gallery, and in commenting upon my account of my interview, she informed me that no one had been able to gain the slightest intelligence of her past life, her friends, or her condition, from her.

"I felt distressingly concerned for this woman. I drove over every day to see her. She became accustomed to my visits—somewhat reconciled to me—though her moods were variable; sometimes bitter and sullen, as I had found her in my first interview; sometimes so wild and frantic as to make restraint necessary; sometimes she was calm and rational. For several days I made no further effort to elicit from her the story of her sins, wrongs, or misfortunes. It was evident from every lineament of her classic face and form, beautiful even in their extreme emaciation, and from every tone and gesture in her voice and manner—free from coarseness even in her sullenest or fiercest moods—that she was a woman of high breeding—that she had fallen from a lofty place.

"But it was not until my pity for the poor creature was changing into love, and she saw it, that I could get her to take anything from me, or accept any, even the most delicate, personal service.

"'No,' she would say, with a sardonic smile, 'I will accept nothing; I have a right to my place in the almshouse, because I have helped to build and support these institutions.'

"Pity is allied to love on the one hand, and to contempt on the other; and in proportion as it approaches love, it recedes from contempt. When she saw that the arrogant and offensive element in my pity was gone, she began to grow a little more grateful for the care I was bestowing upon her. Once she said to me, in one of her few lucid intervals—

Digitized by Google

"'For months I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth; for months I have never slept under a roof, or eaten anything cooked—the forest has been my home—its bed of grass or under-growth my couch, its foliage my curtains, the overhanging sky has been my roof, and its millions of stars my lights: nuts and wild berries my food, water my drink, and the side of some brook my dining-room. I had fled from the cold pity and the colder alms of society to wild nature, the rough but honest mother. And it was the coming on of winter, severe winter, and the approach of the period of my accouchement, that drove me again into the haunts of civilization for assistance.'

"The 'mind and heart diseased' might be detected in her most lucid conversation. She was not one to reason with—I could only love her into calmness and sanity. I brought over some of my own clothing, and after soothing, coaxing, and caressing, administered with the most delicate tact of which I was capable (for it was dangerous to let her think that I considered her a child, or a fool who was to be wheedled). I prevailed on her to take a bath, have her hair combed, and put on comfortable clothing. It was a light blue, soft, warm, French merino that I had brought her, and she looked so beautiful after I had dressed her, that then I first conceived the idea of bringing her home to my house. It was almost a selfish feeling in me—she would occupy and interest me—nay, she had done so to the extent of exorcising my familiar demon, ennui. Mr. Aguilar had sailed for Liverpool, on mercantile business, a few weeks previous—it was too late to consult him—I thought I would take this poor forlornity home, and ask his permission when he returned Fearful of alarming her morbid pride, and her hatred of dependence, I did not name my project to her then, but returned home full of it. I went busily to work and prepared a chamber next to my own—I was so happy and interested in fitting it up—I said to myself, as I superintended the arrangement of the furniture, "Her emaciated and wearied limbs will repose so nicely on this white, clean, downy bed; she will sit so nicely in this deep, soft chair,' and my own heart filled with a sort of delicious emotion, that flowed through every vein, breathing through every pore, dilating as a sponge filling with water, or a child growing as it sleeps. I became deeply interested in preparing baby-linen, just as if it were for myself. 'Come,' said I to myself, 'I will be Pharaoh's daughter, and she shall be the mother of Moses.' In the midst of these occupations an evil thought came to me, and said, 'You are doing all this for—*whom?*—a fallen and guilty woman—a degraded outcast!' And I stopped in the middle of the floor aghast at the sudden recollection, and terrified at the question of what Mr. Aguilar might say to this contemplated act when he should hear of it. And as I stood, these lines, read in my school days, came into my head—

> "'Vice is a monster of such hideous mein,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen;
> But seen too oft, familiar with its face—
> We first endure, then *pity*, then embrace.'

"Yes, I had got to the pitying stage! I was in danger! in the whirl of the maelstrom! I turned giddy, and dropped into the very easy chair I was preparing for her. You used to say, Sophie, that I never prayed to God until I got into trouble—which was as true then as it is now. I was now in trouble—I did not wish to be disappointed of my benevolence—my amusement, then, if you will call it so; and I did not wish to see that poor creature suffer in the bleak chamber of the wretchedly *un*provided almshouse. I was broken upon a wheel of conflicting opinions and emotions. And I prayed to God, that if a baleful, moral miasma was evolved from the presence of this poor fellow-creature, His grace might be the purifying antidote to save me, and I got up from this prayer loathing myself for a self-righteous pharisee, standing afar off from the poor publican, and I saw how far above the authority of the poets, philosophers and moralists, whom I consulted and worshipped, was the perfect law of love—the law of Christ that I had forgotten. Later in the day when this fervor had subsided, as all fervor must, and when I looked at the *rationale* of the affair, it was suggested to me that if the poor creature were guilty, she appeared impenitent—but I replied, 'She is outcast, beggared, and crazed—that is all I know—if she is guilty, it is known to God; if she is also impenitent, she is mad; and has most likely been driven so by cruelty and despair, and I will try to love her back to sanity and to penitence. And in this case I have no right to judge her—to pronounce her guilty. Still, Sophie, I must say, that between old prejudices and new sympathy, between ill-regulated feelings and unsettled opinions, I was very much in doubt as to the propriety of what I was about to do in my husband's absence. Inclination, as is but too usually the case with me, weighed down the scale, and I went to bring my protegé. I had some difficulty with her. I found her in a very lucid state of mind. I congratulated her upon her calmness, and she smiled a sad, strange smile, and said,

"'Ah! you think me sane, rational *now!* But when I rave, rant, and scream! when I tear my hair and clothes! throw myself with violence on the ground! call on God to strike me dead! and blaspheme because He does not do it! *then* you call me mad! phrenzied! Alas! *then only* am I sane, *then only* conscious of my situation, of all I *have* been, *am*, and *shall* be; of my past, present, and future, in their horrid reality; and my raving is but too reasonable! No, madam!" she said, with sorrowful bitterness, 'it is *now, now* that I am dull, stupid, collapsed, *calm* as you call it, that I am *really* insane, for I am now insensible to my condition in all its woe.'

"I asked for no explanation. I had given up that habit long ago. But after a while I proposed my plan to her. She hesitated even when I urged her with tears of sympathy.

"'If I become an inmate of your house, it is right that you should know my whole story, yet that I will never divulge.'

"No! no!' said I, impatiently, alarmed, 'I wish to hear nothing, will hear nothing—I have nothing to do with your past—your future only concerns me,' for I was now beginning to fear her story as a revelation of horrors that I should not have the courage to face.

"In short, Sophie, I took her home with me that very evening to the chamber where I had had a fire already made for her reception, and I spent the evening there with her.

"I kept her there two months. She grew calmer every day under my nursing. At the end of two months her child was born, and from that time it seemed to me that she sank every day. It is true that she recovered from her accouchement, and was able to leave her room, but I could see that a hectic fever had taken a deep hold of her system. I was expecting Mr. Aguilar home every day literally with fear and trembling. I devised a thousand excuses to make for what I had done, and in the end hoped that the joy of meeting me again would lead him to pardon the indiscretion of which I felt that he would accuse me. Fanny Raymond (that was the name of my protegé), sometimes with her quick, unusually quick perceptions, noticed my anxiety, and questioned me about it. But I would smile and tell her that my sources of uneasiness were like hers, incommunicable. In the midst of this, Mr. Aguilar arrived. It was night when he came home. He did not see Fanny that night. Early the next morning before we arose, I told him all about it. He was deeply displeased; nothing but the circumstance of our having just met, after an absence, could have saved me from a very severe rebuke. He said that she must leave the house immediately. I pleaded with him that it was the depth of winter—that she was dying of consumption, or a broken heart, for they are often synonymes. He was inexorable. I arose and dressed myself and wept very much, and then I went to Fanny's room and took up her child in its soft, white night dress, and returning to my own chamber, went up to the bed and laid the babe upon his bosom.

"'What am I to do with the brat? Do you expect me to nurse it?' said he, as he rose up on his elbow.

"I was not afraid of his throwing it out of the window. He was passionately fond of children. It was his weakness. He could not pass a babe in its nurse's arms in the street. That was one reason why I was so anxious for children.

"'It is a beautiful baby,' said he, smoothing out its hair, that looked like bright, pale yellow floss silk. 'But here, take it! Why do you bother *me* with it?'

"The struggle in his mind was so evident.

"'Because,' said I, 'its mother is dying—it has no relatives, I suspect, and no one will claim it—you will adopt it I think—and I hope, I pray, I do implore that you will let its poor heart-broken mother pass the few days of life that remain to her under this roof with her baby.'

"Useless all my prayers and tears. He was sternly determined to send her off with the child, back to the almshouse, he said. He admitted that were the mother out of the question he would cheerfully keep the child. At last I raised the infant and carried it into the next room. Fanny was standing before the dressing glass writing on the table. She looked up as I came in. I never shall forget the expression of her face in this world or the next, it was whiter than chalk, sterner than marble. She came to me, took the child from my arms and laid it on the bed without a word said, then

Digitized by Google

turning to me she embraced me, kissed my hands, pressed me to her bosom, and opening the door pushed me gently out of her own, into my own room. *That was the last time I ever saw Fanny Raymond* An hour after that Mr. Aguilar and myself sat down to the breakfast-table. I sent up word for Fanny to come down. The servant returned with the news that she was out. I breakfasted without any presentiment of what had occurred. After breakfast Mr. Aguilar went to his counting-room and I ran up stairs to see Fanny and her child. Fanny was not to be seen The child lay in her cradle. Going up to look at her I saw a folded note pinned to her bosom and directed to me. I took it off, opened and read it, as well as I *could* read the scrawl. It was as follows:

"'Mrs. Aguilar, your partitions are thin, or my senses very acute—at all events, lying in my bed this morning, I have heard without intending it, every word of your conversation with your husband. I heard his stern but well meant decision, your generous defence and benevolent pleading, and I blessed and bless you, kind angel, from my breaking heart. "If the mother were dead 'he' would take the child," very well, so be it, the mother will die to secure a home for her child—no weak hesitation or weaker regrets *now*. I go and leave you, my child. Take her, Mrs. Aguilar, and give her to your husband as his daughter. Like the Jewish matron whom the Lord had written childless, take the child of your handmaiden and rear it as your own. She was born under your roof, she is yours. I will never return to see or reclaim her. Do you know how much it has cost me to write that? But I will not think! bear on, heart, a few days or hours more. This child—you have been fearing all this time that she was the offspring of guilt and shame, *she is not*. I said that I would not tell you my story, and I will not, because it would involve others. If I were guilty would I be likely to reveal my own shame? If I were to say that I am innocent, should I be likely to obtain credence? But this baby, I must tell the truth of her, she is my husband's child, for I have a husband, though I do not know how long I may have one, nor is he in a condition to claim or take care of his daughter or even of himself; nor does he suspect the existence of this child, for I have been a fugitive from his house five months before she was born. Therefore keep her yourself, she will be a loss to no one but me who resign her. Give her your name, it will make her more your own Call her Rosalia Aguilar *Withers*. Why Withers, do you ask? Well, no matter why, perhaps, because she is the bud of a *wither*-ed tree.'"

"That was all! The mother had given up her child and fled, apparently without a single regret, at least you would judge so from the *words* of her letter; but that letter was nearly illegible with wild and scrawling characters, and almost blotted out with tears. A lock of her babe's hair was cut off from its forehead, and one of its little socks taken away, nothing else was missing. The poor mother had left bareheaded and without outside covering, for her bonnet and shawl were left behind. I was nearly wild with distress, and the poor forsaken babe was wailing dismally for its mother, and I could not comfort it. You know, Sophie, that though I am rather gentle, yet when other people's cruelties to their fellow creatures have very much distressed and grieved me, that I end in getting very *angry*. Well, I sent a footman to the counting-house for Mr. Aguilar, who answered my summons immediately. It was the first time in all our married life that I had ever had occasion to send for him, and he was alarmed. He came running up stairs. I thrust the note into his hands, and it was *my* turn to look daggers at him while he read it, and it was *his* turn to cower before me.

"'We must have her pursued, looked up, and taken care of,' said he, in a trembling voice.

"'Oh, yes!' said I, 'now that she is drowned—you could find no room in the house for her dying form, perhaps you will be able to find some spot on God's earth for her grave.'

"In short, Sophie, I went on in the insolent way in which, when I became excited and reckless of consequences, I sometimes indulged myself towards him, and which he always met with a dignified forbearance that at last quite disarmed me.

"'Do you take care of the child, my dear,' said he, 'while I take measures to recover the unhappy mother,' and he left the room.

"All search proved unavailing—we heard nothing of her for several days, and then we heard that a person answering to her description had been seen walking wildly on the bridge across the river, and the next morning a handkerchief and a shoe were found floating, that when brought to me I recognised as having belonged to her. These created a suspicion that she perished by her own act. Well, Sophie, Mr. Aguilar fell into very low spirits about it, and we redoubled our care of the infant. We procured a wet-nurse, and spared no pains or expense in her nurture and education. She is now four years old; she has been reared in the very lap of love and luxury; but, Sophie, death is near me, at least I fear so, and I must leave my poor dove, my delicate little hot-house rose, to the rough ground and rude blast that make the life of the orphan so hard. And, Sophie, I dare not yet let you know that she is not my child in the flesh, as she is my child by adoption and by an affection that could not be deeper than it is, had I brought her into the world. She was born in my bed, reared in my lap, from the time she was weaned she has slept with me every night. She is the delight of my eyes, the rapture of my heart, she is so beautiful, so angelic! But, Sophie, you will, perhaps, see *none* of this unless you think she is your *niece*, you will see only a little interloper who has feloniously entered your sister's home and heart and carried away her affections and your inheritance, and so, Sophie, I will not for some years permit you to know who she is. Not until her loveliness has won a home in your love, of which prejudice and injustice cannot deprive her. Oh, may God forgive me if this is sin.

"It occurs to me now, Sophie, that as your husband is named Withers, there may be some connexion between the circumstance and the wild fancy name of Withers bestowed by Fanny Raymond on her child. Still it is not likely that there is, at least circumstances forbid me now to investigate it.

"Sophie, this letter has been the work of a week, it has been written in pain of body and pain of mind. To-morrow I must make my will. I shall at the same time place this letter in the hands of Mr. Linton, to be forwarded to you upon the date of the superscription, which will be the eighteenth anniversary of Rosalia's birth-day, and before that if necessary.

"Sophie, all is done—and the sands of life run very low. How much I would give to die on your bosom, my only sister! but it may not be. Stranger faces are around me—menial hands wipe the death dew from my brow.

"Well! to-night perhaps my spirit may be freed and, cleaving the distance between us, hover over your head as you sit chatting merrily by your fireside, thinking of your gay city sister, dancing in some brilliant ball-room. Then I will whisper to your spirit, a dream of our loving infant years, and you shall fall into a sweet pensive trance that shall last until your husband asks,

"'What makes you so silent, Sophie?'

"And you will reply, 'I was thinking of my sister Rose.' And I shall disappear in the thick facts around you. Shall it be so? Yes, Sophie! if my freed spirit shall be *indeed* free, it will seek you before it seeks Heaven.

"I stopped, because weak tears blinded me—but a little child is sitting on my bed, close to my pillow, and she is wiping with her little dimpled hands, the damp dew from my brow, and her soft lips kiss away the fast falling tears from my eyes—let *these* tears be the only draughts of sorrow that she drinks! Love my child, Sophie! Oh, God, Sophie! if you want a guardian angel in heaven, love my child!

"ROSALIA AGUILAR."

Gusty had finished the perusal of this letter. Gusty was no moralist—he was given to emotion rather than to reflection. Yet Gusty fell into deep thought, and the fruit of his reverie dropped in these words,

"Behold the great tangled thicket of sin and misery springing from one small seedling of error. Behold the terrible consequences of one small deception—consequences so nearly fatal! FATAL! Oh, Heaven, is there a word in earth's, or in hell's vocabuluary, strong enough to express the horror of the fate into which this deception had nearly plunged its victim!"

And in deep thought, and with a brow of gloomy gravity, Gusty went over to the Cornucopia, to keep his appointment to dine. He did not get an opportunity of speaking to Sophie before dinner, for the officers were already assembled and waiting. As he entered one door, Sophie came in at another, and they sat down to the table. Sophie was the only lady at the

Digitized by Google

board, and she was looking very pale and languid. Captain Wilde mentioned that this was her first appearance at the table since her long illness. Immediately after the dessert was placed upon the table, she arose and withdrew to her cabin. Lieutenant May made an apology, and followed her.

"You have read the letter, Gusty?"

"Yes."

"And what do you think of it? Strange story, is it not?"

"Very."

"I regret that Rosalia made any concealment from me. I do not know myself very well, but I do not think the knowledge of the facts would have affected my feelings towards Rosalia. The child that my sister loved as her own, would have been very dear to me for my sister's sake as well as for her own, being as lovely as Rosalia."

"Yes, I am very sure of that, Sophie; and I also exceedingly regret this concealment; it might have led to the most horrible end."

"I do not see that."

"No, perhaps not; still it strikes me as having been very wrong, and wrong doing is *always* dangerous, and sooner or later it brings its retribution."

"It *was* wrong. I do not defend it. Still her motive was affection; her intention good. She judged me by the known characters of our neighbors, who are proverbially clannish—who intermarry, who have strong family prejudices, who would be likely to hate an alien by blood, where property is concerned, and that alien has been the means of disinheriting the family; it was the fear that I would look upon the child with dislike, which induced my sister to conceal her origin until now."

"Still, I say people ought not to be so concerned for the results of things—people ought to do *right*, and leave the event to God. I am learning and proving the good of that every day. Why, Sophie! that's what *I* did when I got into a scrape for doing good. I said 'God is above all,' and I grabbed right hold of the promises! with a good *will*, and held on to them! and yon see the upshot! *Why I'm reinstated.*"

"You are *what*, Gusty?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing! only the devil got me into a cursed scrape, and the Lord got me out of it, that's all!"

"It strikes me, Gusty, that you are irreverent in your faith and gratitude."

"Lord! just hear you! do you suppose now the Lord wants to be worshipped *all* the time with tears, and groans, and prayers, with long faces, drawling voices, and melancholy psalms? *No!* I believe He likes variety, or we should not see so much of it in His works. Besides, I think the cheerful incense of a jolly good fellow's faith and worship must refresh the angels sometimes! See, Sophie! remember how David danced before the Ark. Listen! the Jewish historian says, 'he danced with all *his* might.' And one can still better imagine the antics he cut, when they read that Michal, Saul's daughter, 'saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she *despised* him in her heart!' met him with scorn and biting sarcasm—exclaiming with provoking irony, 'how *glorious* was the King of Israel to-day!' &c., &c.; you know the rest. Nonsense, Sophie, the Lord don't want to be always worshipped with a solemn physiognomy; at least it is not my '*gift*' so to worship Him. Listen, Sophie! this is my theory and practice:—If any fellow-creature wrongs or outrages me, I walk right on board of him! thrash him like a man! and then forgive him like an angel! If any inevitable misfortune falls upon me without human agency, I blame the devil liberally! And if any good befalls me, I praise the Lord with all my soul! There, that's *my* orthodoxy—and if any heretic don't like it, he needn't subscribe to it. Dear me, Sophie, when I *am* thankful, I am thankful sure enough; my bosom is a jolly big ball-room, and my heart dances a tarantula all over it."

"I do not know how you can be so thoughtlessly gay while the fate of Rosalia remains shrouded in mystery!"

"God love your gentle sober bosom, Sophie; I have been in the deliriums, in the agonies, in the blues, the horrors, and the dumps, about Rosalia, for six months past, until—I got your—never mind—well, anyway, now it is *all changed*, and I feel such a faith, such a profound and joyful conviction of her safety, that I cannot be anxious from *doubt*, but only from *impatience!* Cheer up, Sophie! I wish I could infuse some of my own confidence into you! Go or send to Genoa. I wish *I* could get leave of absence! Rosalia will turn up soon! She is not dead: if she *had* been—much inquiry as has been made for her, large rewards as have been offered for information about her, it would have been known. She has found friends somewhere! and they help to conceal her, that is all! God is above all!"

"*Conceal* her! of what are you dreaming, Gusty?"

"There it is again! I shall let the cat out of the bag, if I stay here another minute. Good-bye, Sophie."

"But what *did* you mean?"

"Dear Sophie, nothing! my hour is up! I *must* go—good-bye!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

ROSALIA'S WANDERINGS.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we will."

SHAKSPEARE.

I DO not know how *you* feel, but I am fatigued with chasing up and down the world, from Maryland to the Mediterranean, and from the Balize to the Bosphorus, my eccentric set of people, who have exploded in their passion and blown themselves to the four winds of Heaven! I feel like an admiral at sea with a squadron, in which *each* ship is in a mutiny, and *all* in a storm—or like a shepherdess with a very short crook, a very wild watch-dog, and a very unruly flock.

And now I must leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one that is lost—our pet-lamb, Ro-alia—who, if she has escaped the wolf, has withal wandered too far from the fold in going out of sight.

Digitized by Google

Upon the evening of her arrival at Genoa, Rosalia had been shown into her chamber, had been assisted off with her travelling-dress by the chambermaid, had been supplied with some warm water for bathing; and then, at her own request, had been left alone. Finding herself in solitude, she had taken a pencil and paper, and traced the lines of her farewell letter to Raymond Withers. Then like one in a dream, driven by one force, the instinct of flight from Raymond, led by one attraction, the wish for distance and sleep, she began her hasty preparations for escape. Selecting from her wardrobe a dress that Raymond had never seen her wear, and therefore would be unable to describe, one also that would attract the least possible attention, and in which she would be able to glide, spirit-like and unobserved, through the gloaming—namely, a black velvet pelisse, black beaver bonnet, and black lace veil—she arrayed herself, and taking her guitar, with a vague idea of its being serviceable to her, she opened her door and looked cautiously out. It was the hour of dinner throughout the house, and the servants were all away from this division of the establishment. She hurried cautiously down the stairs, watching her opportunity, and eluding observation now by passing vacant galleries, now by gliding through a crowd of busy and hurrying waiters, she escaped from the house and stepped out into the street—into a broad, grand, spacious street, built up on either side with princely palaces, so magnificent that any one of them might have been considered the chief ornament of any other city. Terrified, almost crushed by the stupendous magnificence around her, the timid girl hurried through the stately streets of the gorgeous city, "Genoa the Proud," as it has been styled for its grandeur. Hurrying along under the shadows of the palaces, gliding through the crowds of lazzaroni, the poor, frightened girl approached the north-western rampart. She met many country people coming through the gates, with tall baskets of fruit upon their heads, and in the crowd that was passing *into* the city, she passed *out* unchallenged and unnoticed. She found herself upon the high road leading through the plains, through the forest, and lastly through a defile of the Appenines to the city of Parma. She went on.

The sun had set before she had emerged from the city, and now as she went up the pleasant road, bordered by beautiful herbage and fragrant flowers, by citron and orange groves, the soft and purple evening of Italy, with its clear sky and brilliant stars, was around her. The delicious coolness of the atmosphere stole all the heat from her veins as she wandered on. There seemed something in the air, or the ground, that strengthened her, for as she walked, her faintness and languor left her, and peace fell into her heart and all around her. Oh, yes! it must have been the pure air,—the fresh earth,—the hum of insects,—the hushed flutterings of birds' wings, as they settled on their nests,—the distant murmur of the bay, and the nearer whisper of the breeze—in other words, the influence of nature, the mercy of God that was quieting her excited nerves, cooling her burning fever and composing her stormy bosom. True that she *knew* she was a delicate, a houseless, friendless, penniless, and helpless wanderer in a strange country—she *knew* this, but somehow she could not *feel* it! She only felt the delicious influence of the evening air. A great deal of the anguish she had experienced at parting with Raymond had been expended in the passionate letter she had written, in the passionate tears she had shed. The gathered force of the storm had burst and was over! She was now refreshed. Instead of fainting on the road at every step she took, coolness and strength seemed to strike up from the living earth through her feet, passing into all her limbs. And it seemed to her childish fancy that in the low music of the insects, of the waters and the winds, she heard the angels whisper, "Come along! come along! be a good girl! we are with you!" and she toiled on, *led* on, not knowing where, until the road declined and narrowed into a deep, cool, green forest dell, when, overpowered by a delicious drowsiness, she lay down to sleep. She did not feel alone or wretched—it was strange, but she did *not*. Nature seemed to embrace her in a loving, maternal, *conscious* embrace; God seemed bending over her in blessing. She lay down in the green and growing leaves that seemed to close over her like kindred arms. She fancied in her dreamy, sleepy half-consciousness, that the leaves which kissed her cheek *knew* what they were doing—that the large, bright, solitary star that gazed at her through the overhanging foliage, *loved* as it watched her; only half awake, she stretched her hand up towards it, gratefully smiled, dropped her arms, and fell asleep!—into a sweet, healthful sleep, and dreamed a heavenly dream. She saw the Heath, the bay, and the river. The heath no longer a desert, but covered with fields of waving grain and pastures, that fed flocks of sheep and droves of kine. She saw the forest glittering green in morning dew, and the river flowing brightly on to the bay that flashed in the morning sun. She saw the Hall, no more a ruin, but rebuilt upon the old model—an imposing, yet beautiful villa of white freestone, with verandas running all around it; with vines twined about its pillars; with birds singing in their leaves, and children sporting under their shade. She saw Hagar in the high, bright bloom of health and happiness. She saw Raymond seated at his wife's side, with one arm enfolding her form; she saw or *felt* herself seated at their feet, her head reposing upon Hagar's lap, and Raymond's sedative, white fingers running through her ringlets; and she knew that she loved them *both* well enough to give her life for them, nor could she distinguish any difference in the affection she bore to either. Her heart was filling and rising with a strange joy; she awoke. What was before her? The sky of Italy still bent above her—the bright star still looked down through the foliage upon her,—the flowers and herbs of Italy still bloomed around her—the high road to Parma lay before her,—but what was on that road? A group of men with torches, bending over her. She gazed in startled wonder for a moment,—she was awake and conscious again!—an unpardoned sinner—a fugitive and a wanderer far from her native country. Were these grim-looking men with torches come in pursuit of her, and would they carry her back to Genoa? or were they a band of the dreadful banditti that, inhabiting the fastnesses of the Appenines, sometimes poured down in hordes, scourging the country with fire and sword, even to the city gates? Quick as lightning all this

Digitized by Google

flashed through her brain, and she fainted from terror before the tones of a very sweet voice from a carriage on the high road could reassure her, in the following question, apparently addressed to the men around her—

"What is it, Signor Guillio?"

"A woman, a young lady, I should judge, your Highness."

"*A young lady?*"

"Yes, your Highness."

"Is she hurt?"

"I'm afraid so, madam! I am nearly sure that the carriage wheels passed over her limb, and that she has fainted from the pain."

"Oh, I am *very* sorry!—but how could she have come there? and how very careless to drive over her. Signora Morchero, will you have the kindness to alight and examine into the extent of the mischief done?"

A lady now descended from the carriage, and stepping up to the recumbent form of the fainting girl, stooped and examined her—noticing the richness of her dress, the rareness of her beauty, the delicacy of her hands and feet, and the high-bred expression of every lineament while trying to discover where she might have received injury.

"Will you not examine her limbs, to see if they have been fractured, Signora?" again inquired or rather commanded the voice from the carriage.

The lady bent down, and feeling her ankles, arose again and said—

"Her limbs are not fractured, madam, I think, and the obstruction that the wheels passed over may have been only her guitar; still she is in a swoon."

"This is very extraordinary—what does she look like?"

"She has the appearance of a young person of rank."

"Signor Guillio, give me your hand—I wish to alight," said the lady in the carriage.

The gentleman, who held a torch, passed it to a page, and went up to the vehicle, reverently assisting the lady to descend from her carriage. Leaning on his arm, she approached the prostrate girl; bidding the page hold the torch lower and nearer her face, the lady examined her features attentively. She seemed struck,—deeply interested. Indeed, it was a strange, beautiful picture, upon which no one could look with indifference; the lovely, snowy face, with its delicate Grecian profile, half-shaded by the luxuriant tresses of bright golden hair, and both thrown out into strong relief by the black velvet dress and the dark green pillow of leaves.

"Lift her up, Signor Guillio, and place her in the hindmost carriage, with our page and tire-woman; lift her gently," said the lady, "we cannot leave her here."

The gentleman obeyed; but just as he raised her in his arms, Rosalia opened her eyes; she shuddered and closed them again in fear; but the lady addressed her in a soothing tone, and she looked up once more.

"You have lost your way, probably, young lady?"

Rosalia looked up into the lady's gentle face—she understood Italian imperfectly, so she answered in the affirmative, not knowing what else to say.

"Are you hurt?" inquired the lady.

Rosalia replied that she was not.

"Were you going on to Parma?"

Again, in her surprise and uncertainty, Rosalia replied affirmatively.

"Then we can take you there," said the lady, and turning again to the gentleman whom she had addressed as Signor Guillio, she said—

"Put her into the carriage with the Signora Bianca, and let us proceed on our journey; it is late, and the air is chill."

Signor Guillio assisted the girl to arise, and, lifting her guitar, led her on to a plain, dark carriage, that, standing some yards behind the foremost one, was out of sight from the spot on which she had been lying. Lifting and placing her in it, he merely said to the occupant already there—

"A traveller, Signora, whom the Grand Duchess has picked up, and intends carrying on with her to Parma," and handing in the guitar, he closed the door, and returned to the carriage of the lady, who had already resumed her seat. The party moved on.

The carriages rolled on. Rosalia seemed to herself to be still sleeping, still dreaming. Nay, *this* position seemed more unreal than the dream from which she had been awakened. At length she said to her silent, and sulky, or weary companion—

"Will you have the goodness to inform me, Signora, to whom I am indebted for this kindness?"

"Do you not know, then?"

"Indeed, I do not. I seem to myself to be dreaming, and have only a dim notion of how I came here; who was the benevolent lady who spoke so kindly to me?"

"You are a very new comer into this neighborhood, as well as a foreigner, if you do not recognise Her Royal Highness, Maria Louisa, Grand Duchess of Parma, who has been spending some weeks at the sea side, and is now returning to her own capital."

The simple girl was struck into silence by astonishment and awe

It was near midnight when the carriages entered the gates of a fortified city, and rolling through the streets, at length paused before a magnificent palace. The party entered its portals. Rosalia was provided with a lodging within its precincts, by the woman who had been her fellow-passenger.

It was about eleven o'clock the next day when she was summoned to the presence of the Grand Duchess. Maria Louisa was in her dressing-room under the hands of her ladies, who were arranging her morning toilet. Rosalia entered the sumptuous apartment and the august presence with downcast eyes and hands simply folded upon her bosom; her golden ringlets, parted above her high, pure brow, fell glittering down upon the black velvet boddice of her dress. Everything in her looks and motions repelled suspicion and disarmed prejudice as she flo[illegible]d gracefully on and paused meekly before the Grand Duchess.

"Who and what are you—whence come you, and whither are you going, young girl?" inquired Maria Louisa.

Rosalia raised her gentle lids to meet the noble but haughty eyes of the Grand Duchess, and, inspired by a sudden impulse, in meek accents begged permission to tell her little tale.

Maria Louisa, seeing her languid appearance, pointed to a low ottoman at her feet, bade her

Digitized by Google

seat herself and proceed. But *how* to proceed without deeply inculpating Raymond, she did not know; at last she thought—

"This great lady is so far above us, and so far away from us, that the full knowledge of the facts put in her possession cannot hurt Raymond—and at least, if I speak at all, I *must* tell the truth," and then Rosalia, in her imperfect Italian, "broken music," told her story, told it truly, weeping and blushing, but not concealing her own errors, or sparing her own feelings. Maria Louisa listened with close attention and deep interest. Now, whether it was that, by reason of the narrator's broken language, the Grand Duchess did not understand her errors, or whether because of her ingenuous confession, Maria Louisa was inclined to overlook or forgive them, is not known; but it is certain, that having fully ascertained the perfect destitution of the friendless young stranger, and her entire willingness to enter her service, the Grand Duchess, in rising to leave her dressing-room, said—

"I appoint the Signora Rozzallia second assistant to my lady of the wardrobe," and dismissed her. Later in the day, Her Royal Highness was heard to say,—"That young maiden has a perfect cherub's face. Truth and goodness radiate from it." Later in the *week*, Rosalia was called to sing and play before Maria Louisa; and later in the month, she became the favorite attendant of the Grand Duchess.

A strange, vague fear and doubt kept Rosalia from writing to any of her friends at present. After the lapse of some weeks, she began writing to Sophie; but a strong dislike to expose the vice of Raymond to any of his own friends, caused her to destroy the letter on finding it to be impossible to give any true account of herself without compromising him with his family.

Thus months elapsed, while she remained in the service of Maria Louisa, Grand Duchess of Parma, where we will leave her for the present.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE QUEEN OF SONG.

"Radiant daughter of the sun!
Now thy living wreath is won.
Crowned of Fame!—oh!—art thou not
Happy in that glorious lot?—
Happier, happier far than thou,
With the laurel on thy brow,
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth!" HEMANS.

Two months have passed since the arrival of Gusty May at the "City of the Sultan," and Captain Wilde is ordered to take command of the Rainbow, and carry her home—Gusty May remaining attached to the ship as third Lieutenant; and they sail from Constantinople, intending to touch at Genoa, to bring away the American Consul, who is recalled to Washington. It was on the first of June that the Rainbow cast anchor in the Gulf of Genoa, before "the City of Palaces." Gusty's heart was throbbing with anxiety to prosecute in that city and neighborhood his search for Rosalia, of whom they had not as yet received one word of intelligence. The first man that came on board to greet him on his arrival, was—who but Lieutenant Murphy, who was attached to the Phœnix, then at that port.

"Well, my finest fellow in the service, how does the world treat you nowadays? Got struck from the navy list, for running away with a pretty widow, hey? You miserable sinner for getting found out! Well, where is this new Cleopatra, for whom this modern Marc Antony lost the world? And beyond all the rest, where is the 'golden girl?'—aye, where is *she*? D—l burn me if I don't court her myself if you have failed. I'll see if I can't wake her up just a little bit—for—

"'Oh, she is a golden girl,
But a man—a *man* should woo her;
They who seek her shrink aback,
When they should like storms pursue her!'"

"May I be court-martialed, keel-hauled, and dismissed the service, if I don't make her Mrs. Patrick Murphy O'Murphy, and place her at the head of one of the handsomest establishments in fair Louisiana, if you don't prevent me quickly, my boy!—for—

"'Oh, she is a golden girl!'—

"By the way, talking about beauties, have you seen the St. Cecilia yet?"

"Saint who?"

"'Saint who,' just hear him! where have you been all these months that all Europe has been sung into ecstasies, trances, hallucinations, heavens, by a new Orpheus—by St. Cecilia—by Hagar, the Egyptian!"

"What?—who—which?—where?—when?"

"Whither?—why?—wherefore?—come, go on, give us the whole list of interrogatories, and when you get through, I'll begin to answer. I said, Hagar, the Egyptian—the Spirit of Music—the Queen of Song—Hagar of the Lightning, as her admirers call her—Hagar, the Gipsy—Hagar, the Indian—the Miser—the Prude, as her mortified lovers call her. If you have not seen her you must go to see her to-day; she has been in the city only twenty-four hours. I who saw her at Venice and at Paris, and was introduced to her as a countryman, I have the entrée, and will present you—but where the devil have you been all this time, never to have heard of Mrs. ——, for that is her name?"

Gusty was divided between his joy and surprise at finding his old friend Hagar so near him, and hearing of her success, and his perplexity in untangling the wisp of illusions with which Mr. Murphy's perceptions were fettered. They were now standing on the deck—Gusty being on duty could not leave the ship; Gusty looked around—sailors were passing about—this was no spot for a confidential communication, so he remained silent.

"When I told you that I had the entrée to this lady's apartments, Gusty—I mean to say, that I called on her once in Paris, once in Venice, and that I have left my card at her door to-day; she was out. She sings this evening, and the Grand Duchess of Parma, now on a visit to this city, is expected to honor her concert to-night with her presence. I will take you to her house this afternoon, if you wish it."

"Can you do so without her permission?"

"Surely—yes. One does not need to ask permission of a lady in a foreign land to present a respectable countryman of her own to her."

"A countrywoman of ours," said Gusty, willing to draw him out without divulging any truth there; "how is that?—have I ever heard of her?"

"No, I suppose not—this is something like her

Digitized by Google

career though:—last fall she suddenly appeared in New Orleans, gave a concert which succeeded brilliantly, and which was followed by a succession of splendid musical entertainments, each more astonishing than the last; and just as people began to inquire and ferret out her history, she withdrew herself from the city, suddenly and quietly, as though she had sunk through the ground—which she probably did. She arose to the surface again in the midst of the city of Paris—threw the musical world there into ecstasies, and passed on to Vienna, Venice, Naples, Genoa, tracking her way with music, light, and glory. She has avoided England, as she is said to have avoided the Northern states of her native country. She has tended southward, towards the sun."

"You seem to be strongly interested in this lady," suggested Gusty, with a view of setting him off again, for he had paused, and fallen into a reverie.

"Well! yes, and no—that is, I admire her—wonder at her—get absorbed in her—but it is an emotion of terror, awe, and admiration—such as one may feel in a grand storm, in the midst of sublime scenery, or, at best, under the canopy of a splendid starry night—but—as for what *I* call being interested in a woman—that is to say, in love with her—I, or, in fact, anybody else, I suppose, should as soon get in love with Vesuvius burning."

"Yet you spoke of the malice of her disappointed lovers."

"Calling her 'the miser,' 'the prude,' 'the Indian,' &c., &c.,—yes, but man! they were not lovers of anything else but themselves. The truth is, this lady's private life is one of utter seclusion and exclusion, and all the *petits maitres* in the world are piqued at the *caprice bizarre* that shuts up this divine cantatrice with her children, when she should be giving *petits-soupers* to their elegancies—and the vanity of each is interested in constituting himself an exception to this rule, and he is proportionately wounded and indignant when his overtures of acquaintanceship are rejected."

"Then the life of this singular woman is divided between her professional labors and her children?"

"No—not her whole life—she is, among other extraordinary things, 'a mighty hunter before the Lord'—and when she was in Germany last spring, is said to have achieved wonders in that line. But I am tired of this—where in thunder is the Captain? and are you to be pinned to the main-mast all day?"

"Gone on shore to have a conference with Raymond Withers, the American Consul, who you know, or perhaps you do not know, is a family connexion, worse luck!"

"No, I did not know that, but I do know that the new administration has recalled him."

"Yes, and we are to take him home—d—l fetch me if I think it is safe—doubt if the ship can reasonably be expected to go safe into port with such a load of sin and misery aboard!"

"Why, what is the matter!"

"Oh, nothing, only I hate the fellow, and cannot be expected to speak well of him."

"Well, about this American nightingale; will you be off duty, and shall I come to fetch you this afternoon?"

"N-n-o, Murphy, not this afternoon," said Gusty.

"When, then?"

"I'll let you know to-morrow."

And the friends separated—the rattle-pated Murphy returning to his own ship, the Phœnix, then preparing to sail from the Gulf of Genoa—and Gusty, remaining where he was left, pacing the deck, chafing and fuming, and cursing the delay that kept him chained to the spot, when he was dying to go on shore and seek Hagar. It was late in the afternoon before the return of Captain Wilde released him from duty, and merely pausing long enough to hear that Raymond Withers was still suffering from the effects of his long illness, as well as from severe anxiety to hear tidings of his lost sister, to whose strange fate no clue had as yet been obtained—

"Did he mention Hagar?" inquired Gusty.

"Yes—that is, he said that it had been some time since he had heard from her, and wished particularly to know whether we had received a letter from her lately; of course I told him that we had not—that in fact we never heard from her at all—that she seemed to have dropped us—"

"Did he say when he had heard from Hagar last!"

"No—I inquired, but he said, vaguely, that he could not be precise to a day—that it had been—something over a month."

"Yes! I should think it had been—*something over a month!*" said Gusty.

"What do you mean by *that*, Gusty?"

"Oh, nothing! only it has been something over a month since mother wrote to me, and women seem to be lazier with their pens than with their tongues, that is all."

The truth is that now Gusty was in the Mediterranean, Emily Buncombe wrote to him only, making him the medium of her affectionate messages to the rest of her absent relatives, and Gusty, in "giving her love," always suppressed any allusion to Hagar, or merely said "Hagar is well," leaving it to be inferred that she was still at the Rialto. Raymond Withers had, as has been seen, so artfully avoided the subject of his domestic affairs as to leave Captain Wilde still ignorant of the estrangement between himself and his family. The streets were bathed in moonlight, as Gusty May passed through them on his way to that quarter of the city in which he had ascertained the residence of Hagar to be situated. She occupied a suite of apartments in an old palazza inhabited by a venerable Genoese couple. Gusty knocked loudly at the porter's lodge before he could make himself heard. At last a grey-haired man opened the door.

"Can I see Mrs. ——?" inquired he, giving the *nom de guerre* by which she was professionally known.

The old man shook his head, and was about to close the door in Gusty's face, when he took out his card and placing it in the hands of the aged servitor, requested him to take it up to the lady. He did so; and in a few minutes returned and bidding Gusty follow him, led the way up the paved walk to the main entrance into the hall of the palazza, and throwing open a door on the right showed him in, and retired. The room was empty, and Gusty had ample time to notice its lofty ceiling, spacious extent, and the decayed splendor of its old-fashioned hangings and furniture before a door at the upper end opened, and a regal looking woman, that he scarcely recognised for Hagar, entered. She

Digitized by Google

was evidently arrayed for the evening's exhibition. Her dress of black velvet was thickly embroidered with gold; her tresses, grown out rich and beautiful again, were held back from her brow by a serpent whose scales were formed of overlapping emeralds, and whose eyes were rubies, and fell in long, glittering, blue black ringlets far below her waist; her arms were bare, but serpent bracelets twined around them. Over her whole figure and costume, except that it was thrown back from her face, depended a large, black lace veil wrought with gold. She advanced towards the middle of the floor, and Gusty, starting up to meet her, held out his hand.

"I am so happy to see you, Gusty, my dear friend, it is such a joyful surprise. How long have you been at this port?"

"Only came in this morning."

"Sit down, Gusty," said she, taking a seat herself.

Gusty followed her example, and turned to note the change that had passed over her pale but noble features.

"Gusty, I have been highly successful in my art since I left home, as, perhaps, you have heard. I have made a professional tour of Europe, and have only been twenty-four hours in this city. To-night I sing, and the Grand Duchess of Parma will honor the concert with her presence. I tell you all this, my dear friend, because I know you will care as much as I do for my little victories. I was about completing my toilet when you sent up your card, Gusty, and I had given orders that all persons should be denied. I would have admitted no soul but yourself, Gusty, and in very truth I am not pleased that you should see me tricked out in this way, but to-night I bring out Athenais, a composition of my own, and have to sustain the principal part, that is it! Come to me to-morrow, Gusty, and you shall see me, *myself*, you shall see my children, they are both with me; my little girls,—they are three years old, you know,—can sing better than they can talk, they are in bed now, and I am obliged to leave the house in half an hour to go to the music-rooms. I am usually attended by a matron who is my children's nurse, and my own maid, but on this occasion will you make one of the party, Gusty?"

"With great pleasure, dearest Hagar! but it is so strange to meet you thus; and if one may ask, why do you come to Genoa of all cities in the world?"

"For the reason for which you would suppose that I would keep away, Gusty, namely, because—"

"*Mr. Withers is here.*"

"Yes."

Gusty sighed deeply, and Hagar unconsciously echoed the sigh.

"Does he know that you are here, Hagar?"

"I presume not."

"Will you advise him of your presence?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what was your object in coming here—but—pardon me, Hagar; the interest that I feel in you makes me impertinent, I fear."

"No, dear Gusty, not impertinent. Well! I will tell you," she said, turning, and looking away from him, as a shadow overswept her forehead and her voice choked. "It was—unseen by him—to look upon his face and form once more, unheard by him, to hear his voice once more, there! that is it—condemn, despise me if you please—but that was my motive in coming to Genoa."

Gusty looked upon her high, pale brow, and remained in silent thought for the space of several minutes, and then he said,

"I suppose you have heard very little from your friends during your travels, Hagar?"

"*Friends!*"

"Well! family connexions, then."

"I have heard *nothing* from them."

"Captain Wilde and Sophie are in port here."

"Ah!"

"Yes—I am attached to Captain Wilde's ship."

"Yes."

"And we are to take the American Consul home."

"*Indeed!*"

"Certainly—did you not know of his recall?"

"Not one word," replied Hagar, and she fell into profound thought.

"Now I dare be sworn ths you have heard nothing from Ros—"

"Oh! for God's sake, hush!" exclaimed Hagar, as a spasm contracted her whitening features.

"I must finish if it knocks you down, Hagar! so brace yourself! I say that you have not heard that Rosalia is the own sister of Raymond Withers!"

"Oh! my God, *no!*" exclaimed Hagar, growing dreadfully sick.

"*Hush! stop!* be easy, listen. Rosalia is *innocent—do* keep still, Hagar! *innocent.* I address myself to your *thought*, not to your word! Rosalia is pure! she fled the day of her arrival at Genoa, and has hidden herself ever since!"

"What do you tell me, Gusty? Am I dreaming?"

"I am telling you the truth, and you are not dreaming."

"And where is she? And what has put it into your head that she is Raymond's sister, for *that* part of the story I cannot believe?"

Gusty looking at his watch and finding that there were at least twenty minutes to spare, began and told her the whole story, promising to bring her the documents that would prove it true the next day.

"*Say nothing, however, to Captain Wilde or Sophie of my presence in the city.*"

Gusty promised that he would not, and they soon left the house for the concert-rooms, which they reached in ten minutes' drive.

The concert hall was crowded—crammed. It is with only a few of the large and elegant audience that we have to do. The Grand Duchess of Parma and her suite occupied a box near the stage, and at her feet sat her favorite attendant, Rosalia, fanning her with a fan of ostrich feathers. The blue silk curtains of her box were closely drawn, concealing her party from the eyes of the audience, while they left a good view of the stage. Gusty May had a motive of his own for what he did upon arriving at the Hall, namely: he accompanied Hagar in at the side door, to the rooms in communication with the stage, and concealing himself behind the curtain, took a sheltered view of the audience. He wished to see if the American Consul was in the house. His eye fell upon Raymond Withers, seated in the most distant part of the house. He was the sole occupant of the box. With a quick nod of his head, Gusty retired, and meeting

Digitized by Google

Hagar, who was seating herself before the harp, preparatory to the rising of the curtain, he said,

"Mr. Withers is in the house, Hagar, but perhaps you anticipated this contingency?"

Hagar turned very pale, and said,

"I thought of it—where does he sit? for *I must not turn my eyes towards that quarter of the house.*"

Gusty told her, adding—

"I took pains to ascertain, Hagar, so that I might inform and prepare you, for I know that with all your strength and self-possession, the sudden and unexpected sight of Raymond Withers—if it did not overwhelm you, would at least endanger your success this evening."

Hagar thanked and dismissed him. He turned at the wing to note Hagar. The pallor of death was on her brow, and the arm that half embraced the harp trembled visibly.

"Oh, this will *never* do," he said, "Hagar! let me bring you a glass of wine, or that curtain, now about to rise, will fall upon your *failure.*"

"No, no, not wine, my heart and lungs are on fire now!—bring me ice-water—a large glass of ice-water; it is the only sedative for my feverish temperament."

Gusty departed, and returned with the desired restorative, and stood by her while she quaffed it,—stood by her until she was calm.

"I must not fail before him, Gusty. Now leave me, and—*pray* for me!"

"Now," thought Gusty, as he left her presence, and took his way around to the boxes, "I will go and take the vacant place by Mr. Raymond Withers's side. It will be interesting to notice how he will look when that curtain rises, and gives to his view one whom he as little expects to see—as *I* expect to see my poor hidden dove, Rosalia."

As Gusty said this, he passed behind a curtained box, between the fluttering silken drapery of which, he caught a glimpse of golden ringlets, flashing down the sweet, low forehead of a quickly averted Grecian profile, that shocked his heart into stillness an instant, then muttering to himself—"Why what a fool I am! That is the box of Her Royal Highness Maria Louisa," passed on, and entered the box occupied by Raymond Withers. Gusty had not told Hagar so, but he had observed that the Consul was fearfully changed—his beautifully fair complexion was now sallow; his elegantly carved profile was now angular; from weakness or depression of spirits he had contracted a stoop. His dress was still elegant—for it was habitually so—of black throughout, relieved only by wristbands and collar of the most delicate linen, by a very minute but pure diamond pin, and by a glimpse of a watch chain that crossed his bosom. He was looking straight before him, towards the curtain, as though a strange attraction drew his eyes and thoughts there. Gusty entered without arresting his attention, until he said—

"How do you do, Mr. Withers?"

The Consul turned and greeted him with his habitually elegant self-possession, as though they had but parted an hour before, and nothing had occurred in the interval, and then gave his attention again to the curtain.

"Very well, my prince of self-possession, sustain the character, but if the rising of that curtain don't ruffle the down of your serene highness, I shall be in despair."

Gusty thought he would try him a little, and, as by way of opening a conversation with his quiet neighbor, he observed, carelessly—

"You have seen this *chanteuse célèbre* before?"

"Never," replied the Consul.

"*No!*—I really thought you had, frequently."

Raymond Withers did not reply to this observation, and the attention of both was arrested by the rising of the curtain.

Gusty looked first quickly, anxiously, upon the stage. Hagar was commencing her song with perfect self-possession; he next covertly glanced at Raymond Withers. He, with face pale as white ashes, set teeth, knitted brow, and fiery eye, was gazing at the songstress, who never turned her eyes towards him. The vast room was filling with music. The song was rising, swelling into a fierce tempest of grand harmony, like the rushing of many waters; then receding like the memory of a murmuring rivulet heard in infancy; now thundering on like the storm of battle "hurtling on the plains;" then dying away and away, distant, but yet distinct, like the retiring steps of spirits gliding down the steeps of space. The song was ended; a dead stillness, a long pause followed. The audience had forgotten the artist in her art—had forgotten to applaud until some one, perhaps really the least affected of all, recollected to break the tranced silence, and an avalanche of applause falling, shook the house to its foundation. But Gusty May looked at the Consul. He was sitting still and pale as an image carved in marble. Silence again fell upon the scene.

The cantatrice had retired. Now a gentleman presenting himself before the audience bowed and waited to be heard. He announced that the sudden indisposition of Mrs. ——— had for the moment, arrested the progress of the oratorio, but that she hoped to have the honor of appearing before them on the next evening—that in the meantime the entertainment would proceed without her. The gentleman bowed and retired. Many of the audience arose to leave the house, among the rest the American Consul, accompanied by Gusty May—whose proximity, whose very existence he seemed to have forgotten in the absorption of his thoughts. Raymond Withers, still followed by Gusty May, took his way round towards the stage door. Passing the box of the Grand Duchess Maria Louisa, he found it empty—and heard one lounger tell another, that the party had retired because *one of the ladies of her Royal Highness' suite* had fainted. They reached the saloon at the back of the stage. Raymond Withers, going up to the gentleman who had announced the illness of the *chanteuse*, inquired for Mrs.'——— (giving her professional name).

"She has just this moment left the house, signore," replied the gentleman, courteously.

"Will you furnish me with her address?"

"I regret to say, signore, that it is not in my possession."

"Does any one here know where the lady lives?"

"I fear not, signore."

Strongly suspecting some deception, Raymond Withers prosecuted his inquiries further without success. Beginning to feel ashamed of his position as a self-constituted spy, Gusty May now withdrew, leaving the Consul to pursue his investigations alone.

Digitized by Google

Gusty hurried at once to the Palazzo Marinelli, the temporary abode of Hagar.

"Where is Mrs. ——— ?" inquired he of the porter.

"I do not know, signore, but she gave orders that you should be admitted when you called; will il signore follow me?" said the old man in Italian, as he preceded him to the palazzo, into the hall, and throwing open a door that led into a private room, retired.

"Where is Mrs. ——— ?" again inquired Gusty, of the matron that came to meet him.

"She was summoned from the concert, in haste, to the hotel of the Grand Duchess, and has gone thither. She merely stopped here an instant to say that if you called, I was to ask you to have the goodness to come again to-morrow morning."

The room was littered all over with trunks and boxes and disordered wearing apparel, that seemed to have been hastily thrown out of presses, bureaus, wardrobes, etc. Gusty thought, "This looks like a sudden journey, a flight," but he said nothing, deferring his curiosity until the next day.

"She told me that you would like to see her children, and that I was to show them to you," said the woman.

Gusty assented, and at her request followed her to the upper end of the room, where, withdrawing a white lace curtain that draped a large crib, she revealed the three sleeping cherubs. Gusty looked at them with a tender and growing interest, and then drawing back the curtain with his own hands, he breathed a sigh and a silent prayer for their welfare, and left the room and the house.

It was late, very late, when Gusty returned to his ship, so that he found a difficulty in hiring a boat to take him thither. On his way, while gliding among the numerous shipping, he saw one small craft so remarkable for its elegance, that he could not fail to notice it; he saw the sailors very busy on the deck.

"That is a beautiful little bark," he said to the boatman.

"Si, signore; she is the Compensation, bound for Baltimore, with the first tide to-morrow; they say a lady had her built; and that she carries away a band of German emigrants."

They were now by the side of the Rainbow, and Gusty, who in his relapse of abstraction had perhaps missed the latter clause of the boatman's speech, paid his fare, and hastily sprang on board.

Very early the next morning Gusty May arose and dressed. He came on deck, resolved to ask leave to go on shore immediately. The first object he saw was the Compensation getting under weigh. He stopped and watched her until, flowing before a fair wind, she was out of sight. Then, meeting Captain Wilde, he named his wish to go on shore, obtained leave, and hurried away.

An hour's hasty walk brought him to the Palazzo Marinelli.

"Will you inform Mrs. —— that I have called, and let me know if she can receive so early?"

"Mrs. ——— has left the city with all her family, signore, and desired me to hand you this," replied the porter, placing a thick letter in his hand.

"Gone!—left the city—when?—where?"

"At the dawn of day, signore."

Gusty looked at his letter, hastily opened it, and caught two smaller letters that fell from out of the large one, as he devoured its contents with his eyes and brain:

"DEAR GUSTY:—Meet me this day two months, at eight o'clock in the evening, at Heath Hall. Bring with you Captain Wilde and Sophie, and come prepared to receive from *my* hand, the hand of Rosalia Withers, whose best praise is, that she is worthy of *you*—whose best testimonial of that fact is, that *I* offer her to you. You bring out the late Consul: I charge you, Gusty, as you value my friendship, to make peace with him; nay, Gusty, as you value the blessing of God, giving a long future of halcyon days, extend to your brother the right hand of fellowship. I inclose two letters that I request you to deliver to their respective addresses. *Au revoir*, dearest Gusty. I shall precede you to Heath Hall only by a very few days. HAGAR."

The two inclosed letters were directed, one to F. Raymond Withers, Esq., American Consul for the city and port of Genoa—the other simply to Sophie Wilde.

Divided between astonishment, joy, and regret, Gusty stood rooted to the spot for the space of five minutes after reading this letter. Then it flashed upon him like lightning that he had seen the ship that carried Hagar and her family from the shores of Italy, and such indeed was the fact, as upon a further investigation he proved. He hurried away to deliver the letter at the hotel of the American Consul, murmuring to himself,

"Rosalia safe, found; well, I said so!—I positively *did*, the Lord knows it, although no one else would believe what a prophet I am!"

Gusty gave the first letter to the porter at the hotel of the Consul, and carried the other on board the Rainbow.

"F. Raymond Withers, Esq., American Consul for the port and city of Genoa," had upon the previous evening returned, disappointed, fevered, and weary, to his sumptuous lodgings. Hastily divesting himself of his raiment, he fell exhausted upon his bed, and sank to sleep with a determination to find Hagar, and take possession of her early in the morning—a resolution which he carried out—in his dreams. At dawn the next day Raymond Withers arose, and only paused to arrange his toilet and to breakfast, because it was impossible to find anybody or any place one had to look for at such an early hour of the morning. Immediately after breakfast he hastened to the music-rooms to renew his inquiries; there he met the same gentleman who had answered his questions in such an unsatisfactory manner on the previous evening, but who now hastened to say that he had been so fortunate as to ascertain the address of the signora—she lived in the Palazzo Marinelli, in the north-western quarter of the city. The Consul, bowing his thanks, hastened thither. He was met by the old porter, who, in reply to his inquiries, informed him that the lady, with her whole family, had that morning sailed for the United States. Stunned with disappointment, nearly overwhelmed by despair, Raymond Withers returned to his hotel, there to find a present consolation and a future hope in the note addressed in the hand of Hagar, that had been left during his absence by an officer in uniform, as his page said. He tore the note open; it ran thus:

"DEAREST RAYMOND:—Meet me this day two months, at eight o'clock in the evening, at Heath Hall. Come prepared to meet a new found relative—your own and only sister, Rosalia,—and to unite with me in bestowing her hand on one who loves her and is worthy of her. Measure my wish to be reconciled with you, by your own anxiety to meet me. If you ask why I have now fled your presence, and appoint a meeting of some weeks' distance—I reply, that under all the circum-

Digitized by Google

stances, it is best. We must all be prepared by anticipation for our general re-union, and I prefer to receive you in our own home, and under the happiest auspices. "HAGAR."

CHAPTER XLV.

AN EVENING AT HEATH HALL.

Forgive and forget! why the world would be lonely,
The garden a wilderness left to deform,
If the flowers but remembered the chilling winds only,
And the fields gave no verdure for fear of the storm.
CHARLES SWAIN.

"I cannot think of sorrow now; and doubt
If e'er I felt it—'tis so dazzled from
My memory by this oblivious transport."
BYRON.

FOR three months previous to the events recorded in our last chapter, the gossips of Churchill's Point and its environs were thrown into a state of feverish conjecture as to the meaning of the new doings at Heath Hall.

At first those who passed in sight of the old ruin, observed that a part of it had been pulled down, or had at last, as long predicted, *fallen* down, and went on their way without giving the circumstance a second thought. Then, as the season advanced, those who were in the habit of shooting water-fowl on the moor belonging to the estate, or drawing a net for fish upon its beach, passing very near the Hall, noticed workmen engaged in pulling down the building. Upon being questioned, these men replied in a foreign language unintelligible to the inquirers. This news being carried straight to the village post-office, the country store, the tavern, and other resorts of male gossips, arrested the discussion of agricultural, commercial, and political subjects for the space of an hour. Conveyed thence to the tea-tables at home, it did not tend to quiet the nerves or incline to sleep the ladies of Churchill's Point. There could be no intercommunication among neighbors that evening; but early the next morning every one went "a-visiting." The disappointment was, that everybody having gone abroad in search of everybody *else*, nobody was at home to receive anybody. They missed each other. There could be no comparing of notes that day. In their rising excitement, they tried it next day without much better success, and dodged about the remainder of the week like two persons getting out of each other's way on the pavement, and missing their object. At church, on Sunday, however, the neighbors assembled. Mrs. Buncombe was beset with questions that she could not answer. Mrs. Buncombe had a nervous dread of being supposed to be implicated in anything that might be going on at Heath Hall; and begged her friends to recollect that the family of that estate were not her blood relations, though every one seemed to be under the illusion that such was the case. In very truth the character of Emily had sadly degenerated since the death of the good and wise old parson, and since her marriage with a weaker, if not a worse man. But Mrs. Gardiner Green gave an improvised verbal invitation to "the ladies" to meet at tea at her house on the next evening. Sewing circles and other useful and agreeable Yankee inventions, had not then, and have not yet, travelled down to Maryland and Virginia. The Southern States are far behind the "Far West" in this respect. But to Mrs. Gardiner Green's tea-drinking! par parenthèse, Mrs. Gardiner Green *now* calls her evening assemblies "re-unions," "at homes." The ladies began to drop in at an hour that would be considered too early for *dinner* now a days. Emily Buncombe went, in mood as nearly approaching the irascible as her indifferent nature would permit. I am not about to tell you of a Maryland tea-party with the tea-equipage of chased silver, upon which the crest and initials of the English ancestry have been religiously or pretendingly engraved, or of the inconceivable amount of *substantial* confectionery (none of your vaporish cakes and spiritual ices), all prepared under the eye of the mistress—no, nor of the baked canvas-back ducks, devilled crabs, fried oysters as large as the palm of your hand, or anything else, that made the ladies' tea-drinking look like a public dinner given to a board of aldermen. I will not, because the bill of fare would run to the end of the chapter, and besides, it would make me hungry and I should have to stop to eat, and then I could not write. But I will *proceed* to the *proceedings* of the party. The "mysteries of Udolpho," and Heath Hall were talked over, and it was decided that the one was as deep as the other. Emily Buncombe's voice grew loud and sharp in disclaiming the least knowledge of the subject. Finally, as the weather was genial, it was agreed that the neighbors should get up a fishing festival upon the beach, and that being on the spot, they could take notes. Fish feasts, picnics, etc., at Heath Hall, were liberties that the neighborhood took without the slightest hesitation or compunction in the absence of the proprietor.

The last of the week was fixed for the projected festival, and upon the day appointed the company assembled. They passed, in going to the beach, immediately through the grounds inclosed around the Hall. So rapid had been the progress of the work, that they looked upon the once damp cellars, now no longer damp, but excavated, cleaned, paved, and built up—and the foundations of the house relaid anew. Some half-dozen foreign looking men were at work under the direction of one in authority, who seemed to be an experienced architect. To all inquiries these workmen replied in a torrent of civil but unintelligible jargon. Tarquinius Superbus issued from the building covered with plaster and sawdust, and seeing the company, hastened away, donned his Sunday clothes, and went down to the beach to render assistance to the visitors that had honored Heath Hall with their presence. He had always been accustomed to do this at the command of the ever-hospitable and courteous proprietors of the Hall. When Tarquinius appeared, bowing and smirking his "obedience" to the company assembled upon the beach, he presented a fine opportunity to those in "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties."

He was inundated with inquiries. Tarquinius stood perplexed, bewildered. Tarquinius knew as little as any one on the ground; but it did not suit the self-conceit of Superbus to seem ignorant. Tarquinius mused—he thought of several lies to tell, but discarded one after the other as inadmissible. He seriously thought of telling the gaping listeners that "Mrs. Withers was drowned in the irruption of a whirlwind, and that Mr. Withers had married the daughter of the Pope of Rome, who had a gold mine for a

Digitized by Google

dowager, and that they were coming to keep house at Heath Hall." But he was afraid *this* tale might be soon disproved, and substituted a more credible story—namely, that a large fortune had been left to Mr. Withers, and that Mr. and Mrs. Withers were about to return to Heath Hall, and had sent a staff of workmen under a German architect to rebuild the house. This, divested of its absurdly pompous mistakes of language, was about the amount of information gleaned by the picnickers. And this story in fine obtained credence, implicit credence. Everything confirmed it. Were not the workmen there? and was not the Hall being rebuilt in more than its pristine magnificence? With every circumstance that marked the progress of the redemption of the Heath and the rebuilding of the Hall, the esteem and respect of the neighbors for its proprietor increased. Every one began now to say what a sin it was to have slandered Hagar so—Hagar, too, who in her whole life had never been known to retail an item of scandal. This was not unnatural; calumny is more frequently the result of thoughtlessness than of malice. It was singular that each one now forgot that himself or herself had been most ingenious in his or her suspicions and explanations, and loudest in condemnation. There was a little "leaven of unrighteousness" in the "envy, hatred, and malice" of the few whose nature made them jealous of their friends' prosperity; but upon the whole, the tide of popular feeling was setting in strongly in favor of the expected family at Heath Hall. The work progressed rapidly. At the end of three months you would not have recognised the place. From the foundation stones to the chimney summits, the Hall was entirely rebuilt of fine *red sandstone*, a beautiful dark, purplish red stone found in Maryland and Virginia. The walls around it were rebuilt, and the walks paved of the same material. The yards and gardens were cleared up, the trees trimmed, and the grass shaved down until it looked like velvet. The Heath was metamorphosed into a beautiful, clean, green sward, upon which children might roll and play with delight; the tangled thickets crowding here and there among the rolling hills were converted into beautiful groves; the muddy brooklets at their roots were changed into clear fountains or limpid springs, and seats were fixed there for the convenience of the weary or the contemplative passenger. At the Hall, the out-buildings were of the neatest and most convenient form, and every minutia of use or elegance received its due meed of attention. In a word, the ruin, the desolation, was redeemed, the wilderness reclaimed and "bloomed and blossomed like the rose." People came from "far and near" to see the delightful change, and "Alto Rio," the new name of the estate, cut in old English characters and half concealed in the oak foliage carved under the eaves of the house, became the synonyme for elegance and comfort through the whole neighborhood.

It was three months from the first appearance of the workmen to the morning upon which a beautiful little bark was discovered moored under the shadow of the promontory. Her snowy sails were reefed, and a few neatly dressed sailors were engaged in removing a portion of the cargo from her polished deck to the boat that was to carry it to the beach, where a cart and horse waited to transport it by a circuitous path to the Hall. The sailors seemed to be foreigners. A great part of the cargo appeared to consist of elegant furniture, statuary, pictures, and articles of virtu, for many of the boxes, for convenience, were opened upon the beach. All day the little crew and the assistants from the Hall were engaged in unloading the vessel and conveying its freight on shore, and in conveying and arranging furniture in the Hall. From the moment that the first sight of these proceedings had been caught, a crowd of all the idlers and gossips of Churchill's Point began to gather on the brow of the cliff to watch the operations of those upon the beach below, and many "Oh's" and "Lords!" were ejaculated with gaping wonder as one splendid article after another was revealed to their view by the knockings up of the boxes upon the beach. But they were watching, if perchance Mr. and Mrs. Withers, with their family, were to be seen, or if they had come, or when they were coming. They watched and waited in vain. There *was* a lady down in the luxurious cabin of that little craft, in which she was as much at home as in her native halls, but this lady waited patiently an opportunity of landing quietly after the crowd of gapers and starers should have dispersed. Day declined. The cargo was all disembarked, and even carried away. The beach was clear—the clean looking sailors resting on their nice deck. All was silent, still. There was nothing more to be seen, and the loungers began to think of their suppers and the marvels they had to relate thereat, and to disperse.

The next morning at dawn, a little boat was brought around to the side of the vessel, and a lady assisted to descend into it. Then a maiden and three children were lowered one after the other into the skiff. Two sailors entered it, and taking the oars, rowed swiftly to the beach. The lady stepped upon the sand, the children dancing around her for joy to be released. Sending the youngest child, the little golden haired boy, before her to insure his safety, and leading the little dark-browed girls, the lady, followed by the maiden, began to ascend the side of the promontory by a flight of stone steps recently cut for the convenience of passengers. As the lady, with her children, reached the top of the flight of stairs, and stepped upon the highest point of the promontory, the first rays of the rising sun fell upon the head of Hagar like a blessing! a salutation! that her countenance flashed back in gratitude, in joy, as she bowed her head and knee, and reverently returned thanks.

Let no one sneer. It was the overflowing love and worship of a profound soul deeply grateful for *past sufferings* as for present happiness. She arose and led the children on to the Hall.

What a different return was this to her landing in the stormy winter's night more than two years before!

All that day was occupied in a delightful review of the house and the grounds. The arrangements seemed to give Hagar the utmost pleasure. All the next day was spent in her elegant library, and devoted to business, looking into the accounts of her workmen, paying their wages, and so on. She gave up the third day of her arrival to pleasure, or rather to the pre-

Digitized by Google

paration and anticipation of it; and while the children were left in the care of the maiden who loved them, Hagar employed herself in writing some hundred cards of invitation to all her old neighbors of the three nearest counties, to a festival to be given at Heath Hall on the evening of that day week.

All these invitations were written in pale, blue ink, upon silver edged paper, and sealed with white wax by a seal of two doves. This is the Maryland fashion of announcing a marriage.

"Now, tell me, dear Rosalia; are you quite satisfied—happy?" inquired Hagar of the gentle girl, who had looked in upon her occupation a moment.

"Dearest Hagar! my saviour! I will call you my *sister*, when I dare! dearest Hagar! I have given myself to you, do with me as you please—make me your waiting-maid—anything! I am in your hands—I am *yours*. I accept any destiny from you."

Hagar looked steadily with her calm eyes at the child, then said,

"But, Rose—*Gusty*—do you not love him as he loves, and as he deserves to be loved?"

"Dearest Hagar, I love *you*, wish to love you *only*, to worship, to serve you: dearest Hagar, what can I do for you?"

"Be happy, Rose, and tell me about Gusty—do you not love him?"

"Oh, yes! yes! I always *did*, you know—Hagar—" the child paused, trembled, grew pale; then lowering her voice, whispered, "Hagar, stoop down; there is something I have been dying to say to you, and never found courage to say it—" she paused again; Hagar's brow grew crimson, and,

"Do not say it then, Rose," she murmured low.

"But I must, I must; it is a rankling thorn that must be plucked out," said the girl, in a suffocating voice, paling and fainting.

Hagar laid down her pen, and drawing the child upon her lap, laid her head upon her bosom, and whispered, soothingly,

"There! now say what you wish, Rosalia; as though you spoke to your mother, or—"

"My guardian angel! You give me courage, dear Hagar! Well, listen! I loved—*everybody and everything*—indeed I did! the poor old negroes coming from their work, the blind old horses, and the crippled chickens, just as warmly as I loved you, beautiful Hagar! and Gusty, and Sophie—and—and—"

"Your brother Raymond."

"Yes, I loved everybody and everything, because—because—I don't know why."

"You loved the poor, ugly, and wretched, because you *pitied* them; and the beautiful and happy because you *admired* them, my child!"

"May be so—I do not know—I only *love*. Well, I loved Gusty and Raymond *both*, and both *alike*—God knows I did! until—oh! Hagar, now listen—everybody seemed to forsake, or to hate me, and then I loved *him* only—until—oh, now it comes—*now* listen!"

The girl buried her burning face in Hagar's bosom, and lost her voice. Hagar stooped and caressed her. Rosalia resumed, whispering very low,

"Until one day on the boat, very beautiful and bright he looked, and I threw myself in his arms, thinking no evil, only loving him dearly, and—*he kissed me*—it was not a *good* kiss, like Captain Wilde's and Sophie's; it was a *dreadful* kiss—it burned down through my cheek to the very centre of my spirit—it hurt me to the very heart—to the very quick of my soul! I got away and felt sick and guilty; felt changed and fallen. I was dizzy, reeling, and kept feeling at my cheek with my fingers, as if there was a scar there. I seemed to feel it. I was ill, and possessed with a mysterious fear and aversion of Raymond; yet when I saw my distance wounded him, I felt remorseful, and conquering my aversion, forced myself to keep near him. Wretched as I was, I could not bear to give him pain; and so, Hagar, I remained with him, and he kissed me so, again and again! and each kiss seemed to sink me lower and lower in a pit of infamy, until I could not bear the thought of ever facing any of my friends again. I was already fallen—lost in my own eyes. Oh! Hagar, listen! listen, my sister Hagar! I might have been insane, but I do not urge that in extenuation of my weakness. I was drawn in, and drawn in, like one in the whirl of a maelstrom—feeling the danger, the fatality—yet unable to stop myself—yet, Hagar, it was *all* suffering—*all*, Hagar! *all*. I felt already fallen below redemption. I was in the power of a will stronger than my own—and, oh! worse than all, I was afraid to pray; afraid to touch the bible, for fear something dreadful would happen to me as a judgment. I felt so sinful, *so sinful*. I felt ill on the voyage out. And *then* I thought of Mary Magdalen, and I said, 'If God, the Father, is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, Christ will surely pity and deliver me.'"

"But you should not have lost faith in God, dear Rosalia. You are the work of His hands, and you could not have fallen so low that the Father's arm was not long enough to reach you, the Father's hand strong enough to lift you, the Father's love great enough to redeem you! Never, *never* doubt it! The FATHER'S LOVE is the greatest reality of my experience. Oh, Rosalia! to doubt the love of God is to grieve the heart of God—believe it!"

"Well, I prayed—*I prayed!*—and then it came into my head to run away when I should get to Genoa—and even if I perished from want indeed, Hagar, I was *willing* to perish! But then—now here is a strange thing. After taking this resolution to leave him secretly, I felt a remorse at the idea of deceiving him, and giving him pain, and I could not bear to look on his confiding face. I *knew* I was doing right in leaving him, yet *felt* as if I were doing wrong!—explain this to me, Hagar—was I crazy?"

"No, dear Rosalia; you were sane—*your* love for him was pure and holy—*his* passion for you was an illusion, an insanity. *Your* love for him would have blessed and elevated him to heaven; his passion for you would have drawn you down to hell. Yours was divine love—his was fiendish passion. All powers of good and evil were striving in your bosom, poor Rosalia; but your angel saved you! But, Rose; do you still love your brother?"

"Oh yes! yes! how can I help it?"

"That is well, Rose—he is your only brother—he does not love you in any sort just now, I know; because sinful thoughts killed his love—but, Rose, *you* must love him back to purity, to health and life, and *then* he will love you rightly. This will be difficult at first, but it will grow

Digitized by Google

more easy every day. And Gusty, Rose! that noble man. Just give your whole heart, soul, and life, up to him, and think the gift—not enough!"

"Ah, Hagar! Do I not esteem, reverence him for all you have told me of his goodness and greatness—only I am not worthy of him."

"He thinks you are, Rose, and you must try not to disappoint him."

"Well, now, dear Hagar, I have told you all—and you do not reproach me; alas! if you were to drive me away I could not complain."

Hagar caressed her fondly but gravely, and remained silent, continuing to write, fold, and seal her cards. At length they were all finished, and she requested Rosalia to ring the bell. Tarquinius answered it. Hagar collected her cards into a packet, and giving them to Tarquinius, gave orders that he should saddle a horse and ride to deliver to their address as many as could be forwarded that day—and to resume his circuit with the morning, until all should be disposed of. Then rising and calling Rosalia to follow her, she went into her chamber and sat down with the maiden to work on a beautiful white satin dress.

Tarquinius Superbus mounted the most superb horse in the stable, and sat forth upon his mission. Never did a highland runner with the crois-taradh kindle a greater excitement among the rocks and glens of Scotland, than did Tarquinius with his missives. The first card was delivered at Mrs. Gardiner Green's plantation. Mrs Buncombe was taking tea with her (Emily had not called on Hagar since her arrival; but then, be it known, Hagar had given her no intimation of her return). The card was sent in and the messenger called in. He obeyed the summons, and stood, hat in hand, bowing and smiling, at the parlor door, where Mrs. Green and her guests sat at table.

"A wedding at Heath Hall—and who is to be married?" was the question addressed to him by three or four ladies in a breath.

Tarquinius did not know. He said he believed "that Mr. Withers had been killed in a duel with the King of Camshatka, and that Mrs. Withers was going to be married to the Prince of Patagonia;" and seeing several of the ladies for whom he had cards, present, Tarquinius, in a very unconventional manner, proceeded to deliver them, to save himself some miles of travel. Seriously doubting Tarquinius' report and explanation of the mystery, the ladies all determined to accept the invitations to *le mariage inconnu* to come off at Alto Rio.

The day of the festival arrived.

Rosalia was awakened from her morning's dream by a soft kiss dropped on her forehead, and she raised her lids to see Hagar standing by her bedside, with brilliant eyes, arched brows, and smiling lips.

"Good morning, dear Rosalia! *Good* morning! Rise! it is a glorious day—see! the sun is smiling a salutation through your windows."

Rosalia, putting her two white arms up from the bed, lovingly drew down Hagar's head and embraced her.

"Come," said Hagar, assisting her to rise and leading her to a window. "Look forth! It is an auspicious morning! All nature smiles upon your bridal day."

It was indeed a glad, jubilant morning! The sun had risen in cloudless splendor, tinting with a golden radiance the gauze-like vapor that rested as a veil over forest, heath, and Hall, river, cliff, and bay! The scene was full of freshness, light, and music!

"Oh! look and listen, Rosalia, woods and waters sing and the birds pause to hear! listen!"

"But, dearest Hagar," said Rose, gazing forth upon the bay—"after all, suppose our friends do not come; a meeting appointed two months beforehand in a foreign country! So many things may have happened!"

"Look, Rosalia!" replied Hagar, holding a letter, "they were in Baltimore a week ago; this letter is from Gusty, it came late last night. I did not get it until this morning; it is an *avant-coureur* of our party. They will be with us by this evening's boat."

Rosalia did not reply in words, but still happiness was beaming on her face.

"Listen again, Rosalia, my darling—Emily will be over this morning to breakfast with us. Shame kept *her* and pride kept *me* from making any advances towards a renewal of friendly intercourse—but this morning I arose in a better mood. I could not feel resentment (that, however, I *never* felt), but I could not feel indifference towards the mother of my dear, noble Gusty, and the future mother-in-law of my Rosalia. So, love, I wrote her a kind letter, explaining the whole affair. I told her that Gusty would be here this evening to fulfil an appointment, and begged her to come over this morning. Could we cherish a cold feeling towards any one to-day, love! She wrote me a line back to say that she would come with pleasure, and to say—what do you think, Rosalia?—that she would have been to see us before—wished to come, but doubted if her visit would be welcome? Come! I sent Tarquin immediately back with the carriage to bring her over to breakfast, for you know, love, that Emily has no conveyance but her horse—I expect her every minute—so dress yourself quickly, Rose, for breakfast."

Rosalia threw her arms around Hagar's neck and thanked her. She was soon ready, and left her chamber accompanied by Hagar, and descended the stairs in time to see through the front door, Emily Buncombe alight from the carriage. Rosalia went timidly to meet her. Emily folded her to her bosom in a warm embrace, and then turned to receive Hagar's offered hand. They went in to breakfast; but when Emily would have pushed a thousand questions as to Rosalia's flight or abduction, and Hagar's absence, the latter gravely replied that Rosalia had passed the whole of her time, from her landing at Genoa, first in the service of the Grand Duchess Maria Louisa, and afterwards with herself, and ended with the announcement that Rosalia was the sister of Raymond. In the stupor of astonishment into which this news threw Emily, she forgot to push her investigations about the flight any further; but made many inquiries concerning Rosalia's newly discovered relationship. Hagar gave her all the information in her possession, and ended with announcing the fact, that Rosalia's fortune, left to accumulate at compound interest as it had been, now amounted to the snug little sum of twenty-five thousand dollars; no plum, certainly, but still enough, taken with his income, to give Gusty a fair start in the world, at least to purchase that small estate, and build, ornament,

Digitized by Google

and furnish that beautiful little home Emily was so anxious to secure for her son. These matters Hagar freely discussed with her, because she admitted that Emily had a personal interest in them. But when Mrs. Buncombe would have pried into her own private matters, Hagar gravely waived all interrogation, and Emily, in default of better information, was forced to take Tarquin's account of matters and things—namely, the great fortune left to Mr. Withers in England. Notwithstanding this, the day was spent pleasantly, very pleasantly, in preparing for the evening; and Hagar, our Hagar! how can I describe her waiting for the evening! and how, as the hours passed, her brow became more and more arched and expanded, until it was open as the brow of hope! and how her steps became lighter and more light, until the spring of her little foot seemed to impel the earth upon its orbit!

Day declined. Twilight was falling cool and purple over the forest, heath, and bay, as a packet boat wended its way down the Chesapeake, drawing near to Churchill's Point. A party of passengers were collected on the deck—a party consisting of Captain and Mrs. Wilde, Lieutenant May and Raymond Withers. They were conversing gaily. The boat neared Churchill's Point. The village was nearly dark and deserted; doubling Churchill's Point they came in sight of Alto Rio, the new Heath Hall. It was brilliantly illuminated from attic to cellar. The lights streamed from its many windows—streamed across its lawn, revealing scores of carriages filling up the space between it and the water's edge,—and streamed across the bay, throwing a flood of light upon the spot where the boat at last anchored, close by the side of another beautiful little craft, the Compensation, moored under the promontory. The travellers landed, and taking their way up the new stone steps that led up the ascent of the promontory, proceeded on their way towards the house, struck with admiration and astonishment at the marvellous changes they everywhere witnessed. It is true that Raymond Withers and Gusty May knew perfectly well the source of this sudden wealth, and even Captain Wilde and Sophie, since Hagar's letter to the latter, divined it. The emotions of Raymond Withers were soon all merged in one strong feeling—a heart-burning impatience to clasp Hagar to his bosom. He thought that were he about to meet her in poverty, ill health, and humiliation, he should embrace her with as *much* affection and with *more* self-respect—upon the whole, however, he was not anxious to have his disinterestedness submitted to this test. He had, before leaving the boat, bestowed the utmost attention upon his toilet, and his dress was now the very ideal of taste and elegance, as his person was of manly beauty. In the grand diapason of the reconciliation was trilling this one little absurd note.

We will precede the party to the Hall.

The lights from the Hall streamed from every window over the scene; the grounds in front of the Hall were blocked up with carriages. The verandas running around the Hall were crowded with coachmen and footmen, the attendants of the guests; the lower rooms of the Hall superbly furnished, beautifully ornamented, and brilliantly lighted, were filled with splendidly dressed company. An upper chamber of the house was occupied by three ladies; one, a young maiden, sat upon a dressing-stool in front of a full length mirror, and two stood, one on each side, adorning her for the altar. Emily Buncombe looked very fine—in a straw-colored satin, with a pretty lace cap, trimmed with white snowdrops; our Hagar looked the princess that she was, in her delicate white lace, over a rich white satin, with her brilliant black ringlets collected at the back of her head by a diamond-set comb, and dropping gracefully upon her crimson cheeks, undulating neck and bosom. Diamond bracelets flashed upon her rounded arms, and a diamond necklace encircled her throat. It was Hagar who looked like a royal bride. But she was decking a bride. Not a jewel would Hagar permit to desecrate the maiden's beauty. A chaste and simple dress of white silk, trimmed with narrow lace, leaving the full, rounded, and snowy neck and arms bare, and a very slight wreath of young orange blossom buds crowning her golden ringlets, completed her beautifully simple toilet.

Two young girls from the neighborhood—young girls of twelve years old, selected that evening from the company below, were waiting to attend her. Her toilet was only just completed when a rap was heard at the chamber-door, and Hagar's housekeeper entering said—

"Mrs. Withers—Captain Wilde, Lieutenant May, Mr. Withers, and their party, have arrived."

Hagar had supposed that she would be prepared for this meeting, anticipated for two months past, and momentarily expected now. She had thought to have received him there, in her beauty, glory, and pride, with her regal self-possession,—but when the words "Mr. Withers has arrived" fell on her ear, her heart *sank down—stopped—the hand of death seemed on her!* Intense frost burns like fire in contact—extreme joy is so like pain as to be undistinguishable.

"Ask him to come up," said Hagar, in a dying voice, as she stood leaning upon the shoulder of Rosalia for support—Rosalia still sitting on her dressing stool.

Hagar felt that life and death were striving in her bosom—nay, she thought that death had come—and only prayed that her last breath might flow past Raymond's cheek and hair, with her head upon his breast—as she leaned more heavily upon Rosalia, until her long black ringlets overswept and half-concealed her form. Now she thought to receive him there! dying there! But lo! a light, quick footstep is on the stairs!—each footfall strikes a chord that vibrates to the centre of her heart! shocking all her nerves into electric life!—she started—sprang—color flowed richly back to her cheeks—light radiantly to her eyes! Like lightning she flashed from the room out into the dark passage.

He was coming up the stairs, wondering how he should present himself before her, when, as he reached the landing, he saw a brilliant white-clad spirit gleam out across the darkness, and the next instant the angel was in his arms—*her* arms about his neck—pressed to his bosom—her heart throbbing warmly, humanly against his own.

No word was spoken yet. They had met unpremeditatedly—in silence and darkness—in that *pure*, though passionate embrace!

What to them was all the wrong and woe of the last two dreadful years? Forgotten! as it had ever been. A dark background, only throwing out into stronger light the rapture of the present meeting—*for an instant*—but ah! when

Digitized by Google

recollection came to one! He stooped over her and whispered—

"Hagar! I have not one word to say for myself! not one excuse to offer for my weakness! not one syllable to breathe in palliation of my fault! Hagar, I am bankrupt!"

But she drew him to a seat, for emotion was overpowering her, dropped upon his lap, her arms around his neck, her head upon his shoulder, her ringlets sweeping over him, and wept! wept!—she, from whose proud eyes of fiery light, bitterest *grief* had never wrung one tear—*wept!*—as though the fountains of her life were broken up and gushing through her eyes! For *joy*, reader?—Not altogether; was not her king—*her* king, discrowned before her? and though she loved him! loved him! as only high hearts like hers *can* love—no *worship* mingled with that love!

But a bride was waiting to be led before the bishop. Rising, Hagar took his hand, and conducted him silently into the room, led him silently to Rosalia's side, and laying her hand upon her shoulder, said softly,

"Turn and greet your brother, Rosalia!"

She arose, blushing, trembling, and Raymond Withers opening his arms, folded in one embrace his wife and sister to his bosom.

Ten minutes after this a bridal party stood up in the middle of the gorgeous drawing-rooms below. Bishop Otterback performed the ceremony. Raymond Withers gave away the bride. Sophie Wilde removed the veil from the maiden's head at the conclusion of the rites.

The wedding was the most splendid festival ever given in ——— county. Many of the guests from a distance remained all night. It was near the dawn of day before the visitors, those who left the house at all, dispersed, and those who remained had retired to rest.

The sun was rising when Hagar, followed by her husband, entered the nursery. She led him to one little bed where the twin girls were still sleeping in loveliness. He stooped and kissed each brow without waking either. And then she drew him off to a crib, where slumbered the boy he had never seen. She stepped ahead of him, and lifting this child up from his morning sleep, stood him upon the floor in the sun-light to waken up in his beauty! And how sparklingly beautiful he looked with his pink feet on the rich carpet, and his golden curls falling in rippling, glittering disorder about his temples and throat, and flashing in the sun-light, as he stood there waking up, with his graceful head stooped sideways like a bird's looking archly, shily, and half loving, half afraid at the handsome stranger standing near his mother. Raymond stooped and lifted him in his arms, and then the child, with a shout of clear, sweet laughter, recognised the father he had never seen before, expressing his delight in these words,

"Oh! *you* are beauty—like mamma!"

With infants *love* and *beauty* are synonymes—everything they love is beautiful, and everything that is beautiful they love.

"And what is his name, mine own Hagar?"

"*Raymond!* but for distinction sake, as well as that because he is a sunbeam, we will call him Ray!"

The little girls now waking, and hearing their mother's voice, arose and ran to greet her, and they too shared the caresses bestowed upon their infant brother.

The beautiful family were all now united in love and joy.

Later in the day, Hagar gave her husband an explanation that the reader must also have—she said,

"You have not asked me, Raymond, about the foreigners around us; yet you must have wondered why I employed a dozen foreigners rather than my own country-people—I will tell you in a very few words. All the money we possess was made in *Europe*, from ministering to the luxury of the wealthy aristocrats. But I saw numerous wretchedly poor and suffering peasants—many of them I found upon inquiry to be excellent artisans and agriculturists, who would work if they could obtain employment, and I said to myself, I am about to spend the money I have made here in rebuilding a ruin, and in reclaiming a wilderness. It will be a great labor, and it will only be justice to give this work to a few of the people among whom I made this money. I thought that if I could bring a dozen workmen over to this country, and give them employment for a while as a start, it would be but right. I had a little vessel built out there—I called it the 'Compensation.' I got a skipper and one or two experienced seamen—the rest of the crew consisted of the artisan emigrants I was to bring out. I paid them some money in advance to leave with their families, until they got settled in this country, and rich enough to send for them. I had previously sent out half a dozen mechanics under an architect, to rebuild the Hall; and in three months from the day of their sailing, and only one week ago, I arrived with my emigrant agriculturists. They are at work. I know this was right, Raymond, and I hope you think so."

"My noble Hagar!"

Alto Rio is now the most fertile and productive plantation in Maryland. The Hall is the seat of elegant hospitality. Hagar is now in the meridian of her life, and of her well preserved beauty. Her daughters, Agnes and Agatha, are grown up; they are called the twin beauties; her son is a noble boy, he is a cadet at ———; they have no other children.

Not very far from Alto Rio is another handsome villa, it is the residence of Captain Autusgus W. May, U. S. N., and is presided over by a lady who would be thought surpassingly beautiful and elegant in any neighborhood not adorned by the presence of Hagar Withers. They have a numerous family of girls and boys.

Sophie is again in the Mediterranean, with Captain Wilde. They have no family, and assert that they are contented that such is their lot, and I thoroughly believe them, for they love each other devotedly, and are never separated, Sophie going with him on all his voyages.

Our old friend, Blanche Rogers—have you forgotten her?—is now at last the Right Rev. Mrs. Otterback; she got the bishop at last. It was at Gusty and Rosalia May's wedding that the final blow that brought him to her feet was struck.

Emily Buncombe is still mistress of Grove Cottage, and Mr. Buncombe is still pastor of the Church of the Ascension.

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS

OF

SILVIO PELLICO;

OR

MY PRISONS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY M. J. SMEAD AND H. P. LEFEBVRE.

NEW YORK:
J. & H. G. LANGLEY, 57 CHATHAM STREET.

1844.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

SILVIO PELLICO.

Silvio Pellico, a distinguished Italian poet, was born in the year 1789, at Saluces, in Piedmont, where his father, Honorato Pellico, also a poet, held a situation in the post-office. Notwithstanding a sickly infancy, the love of poetry early took possession of his soul. He was a poet, so to speak, from his cradle: at ten he had composed a tragedy. He had an emulous companion in his classical studies, in his elder brother, Luigi, who has since become a distinguished comic poet. Both having, at an early age, evinced a genius for dramatic composition, their father encouraged its development by arranging the scenes which they composed, and aiding them in the construction of a little stage, where they recited their effusions. Silvio removed with his father to Turin, where he pursued his studies with promising success, and where his taste for letters became more decidedly manifest. Here he is said to have formed an attachment with a young lady; but Providence saw fit to remove, by an early death, the object of his affection. This was his first love, and his first sorrow; the remembrance of which, his after sufferings were never able to obliterate.

At the age of sixteen, he accompanied his mother to Lyons, where he resided four years with a wealthy cousin of hers, dividing his time between a refined and elegant society and the study of those beautiful productions of genius with which the French literature abounds. But, suddenly seized with what is called *le mal du pays*, occasioned by reading a new poem by Foscolo, *The Tombs*, he felt an irresistible attraction towards the land of his birth, and a few days after was on his road to Italy.

Settling at Milan, he established there his reputation as a poet. By his merit and amiable manners, he gained access to the house of Count Briche, who entrusted to him the education of one of his sons. He afterwards became tutor to the two sons of Count Porro Lambertenghi, with whom he lived on a footing of great intimacy. The house of the latter was, at that time, the rendezvous of all the distinguished characters of Milan as well as of many strangers of distinction. There Silvio met Byron, Madame de Staël, Davis, Schlegel, Brougham, and many other renowned personages, who passed through this city from all parts of Europe.

In 1819, he published the tragedy of *Francesca da Rimini*, the brilliant success of which placed him at once in the highest rank of the dramatic poets of that day. His translation of *Manfred* appeared the same year. His second tragedy, *Eufemio di Messina*, was forbidden by the government to be represented; but, though deprived of the illusions of the stage, it

Digitized by Google

was found worthy of the renown of its author.

Under the auspices of Count Porro, he established a journal, entitled *The Conciliator*, having for its object, the regeneration of Italy, by introducing a new system of national education, giving a better turn to literary effort, extending the range of criticism, and imparting an impulse to young writers, by opening to them new fields in science, art, and literature. This journal was conducted by an association of men of the highest literary eminence in Italy: Romagnosi, Melchiore Gioja, Manzoni, Grossi, and Berchet, of whom Silvio was appointed secretary. The political opinions it professed soon drew down upon it the censures of government, which, in less than a year, put an end to its existence.

When Silvio, accused of being connected with a secret association, and of taking part in a plot against the government, was arrested and confined in the prison of St. Marguerite, his bosom friend, Piero Maroncelli, who figures in so touching a manner in the following memoirs, had been imprisoned there six days before. Providence seemed to preserve to him this friend for the purpose of aiding him to support his misfortunes.

During his confinement under the *leads* at Venice, he composed the two tragedies, *Ester d'Engaddi*, and *Igenia d'Asti*. Before setting out for Spielberg, he begged the Commission to send these two pieces to his parents as a memento of his poetical genius. The answer he received was, that his parents might perhaps determine to publish them, and that it was not fitting that the applauses of Italy should be awakened by the productions of a man who had been smitten by the justice of the Emperor.

Generally, those who write their memoirs, entertaining the design either of clearing themselves from some imputation, or of imparting some interest to events in which they have taken part, study to present them, at others' expense, in a light most favorable to themselves. In the book of Silvio, on the contrary, we find no recrimination, no attack upon his enemies; it is the touching recital of the miseries of the most rigorous imprisonment, written with all the eloquence of grief, but with all the calm of intrepid Christian resignation. His very moderation speaks with more effect against the despotic cruelties of the Austrian government, than whole volumes of the bitterest invective and complaint. With what affecting simplicity he paints his impressions, his feelings, and his struggles to triumph over himself and all resentment! The exquisite sufferings of the poet cannot but excite in his readers a lively sympathy, and those even who do not partake the religious convictions which sustained him, will not venture to deny the benefits of Christianity, after having read his memoirs. He regained his freedom in the August of 1830, and reached Turin on the 17th of September following, where he still lives in the enjoyment of the devoted affection of his family, and the esteem of his countrymen.

Those who have seen this remarkable man, say, that his countenance, while it bears the traces of suffering, has a subdued and melancholy sweetness of expression, that it is impossible to imagine more gentleness and modesty, and that his language, which is the image of his soul, breathes that noble simplicity, that universal benevolence, that ardent love of humanity, which so generally pervade his writings.

THE TRANSLATORS.

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS OF SILVIO PELLICO;

OR

MY PRISONS.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Have I written these memoirs from the vain motive of speaking of myself? I sincerely desire that it may not be so; and as far as one can be the judge of himself, I believe that I had in view objects much more elevated: I wished to administer some solace to the unfortunate, by the recital of evils that I have suffered, and the consolations to be found (I speak from my own experience) even in the greatest misfortunes.

I wished to bear witness, that in the midst of my long sufferings, I have in no respect found human nature so unjust, so little worthy of indulgence, so deficient in noble souls as it is generally represented.

I wished to urge generous hearts to guard against feelings of animosity, but rather to love all men, and to entertain an irreconcileable hatred for nothing but falsehood, pusillanimity, treachery and all moral degradation.

I wished, in fine, to repeat a truth already well known but too often forgotten; namely, that both religion and philosophy demand energy of will and calmness of judgment, and that without these two conditions united, there can be neither justice, nor dignity, nor any fixed principles.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MY PRISONS.

CHAPTER I.

On Friday, the thirteenth of October, 1820, I was arrested at Milan, and conducted to St. Marguerite; it was then three o'clock in the afternoon. I was subjected to a long examination, during that and many following days. But of that I will not speak; like a lover ill-treated by his mistress, and determined to preserve towards her a disdainful silence, I let politics alone and speak of something else.

At nine o'clock in the evening of that unhappy Friday, the registrar consigned me to the hands of a jailer, who having conducted me to the apartment assigned to me, politely desired me to deposit with him, to be restored at a proper time, my watch, my purse, and all that I had about me, and respectfully bade me good night.

"Stop a moment, my good friend," said I, "I have had no dinner to-day; bring me something."

"Directly—the restaurateur is close by, and you shall see what good wine"—

"Wine! I do not drink any."

At this reply, Signor Angiolino regarded me with an expression of alarm, and like a man persuaded that I was jesting. Jailers that keep a refreshment shop, have a horror of a prisoner who does not drink wine.

"I drink none, I assure you."

"I am sorry for you, sir; solitude will prove doubly burthensome."

Seeing that I did not change my resolution, he departed, and in less than half an hour brought in my dinner. After I had eaten a few mouthfuls, and swallowed a glass of water, he left me alone.

My room was on a level with the ground, and looked out upon a court. There were prisons on the right, prisons on the left, prisons in front, and prisons above me. I leaned against the window and stood some time, listening to the tread of the jailers who went and came, and to the frantic songs of some wretched prisoners.

I reflected: "This prison, one century ago, was a convent; did the holy and penitent females who inhabited it, ever suspect that a day would come when their cloisters would no more resound with the groans and pious songs of women, but with blasphemies and ribald songs; and would contain men of all sorts, destined, for the most part, to the workhouse or the scaffold? An age hence, and who will breathe in these cells? Oh! the rapid flight of time! Oh! the perpetual mobility of things! Can he who considers these, complain, if fortune has ceased to smile upon him—if he is buried in a prison, or menaced with a gibbet? Yesterday I was one of the happiest beings in the world! To-day I enjoy no more of the sweets which constituted the charm of my life; neither liberty, nor friends, nor hope! No, to deceive myself would be folly. I shall leave this place only to be thrown into some horrible den, or to be delivered to the executioner! Well, the day after my death, it will be the same as if I had breathed my last in a palace, and had been carried to the tomb with the greatest honours."

Reflecting thus upon the inexorable flight of time, my spirit gathered strength. But then my father, my mother, my two sisters, my two brothers, and another family that I loved as if it were my own, presented themselves to my imagination, and the arguments of philosophy lost all their force upon me. I was overcome, and wept like a child.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

Three months before my arrest, I had been to Turin; I had seen, after several years of absence, my dear parents, one of my brothers and my two sisters. Our whole family was always so much attached to each other! No child was ever more caressed by his father and mother than myself. Oh! how deeply was my heart moved at the sight of those revered parents, in finding them more broken by age than I had anticipated! How I wished then to leave them no more, but to devote all my attentions to solace their old age! How much it cost me during the short stay that I made at Turin, to fulfil certain duties, which kept me away from the paternal roof, and left me so few hours for the society of my dear family! My poor mother said with a sort of melancholy bitterness—"Ah! our Silvio has not come to Turin to see us." The morning of my departure, our separation was most painful. My father entered the carriage with me, and accompanied me for a mile, and then returned alone. I turned to see him once more, and wept; and kissed a ring which my mother had given me. Never before had I felt my heart so torn in taking leave of my family. Not believing in presentiments, I was surprised that I could not vanquish my sorrow, and was forced to cry out with alarm: "Whence comes this extraordinary anxiety?" I seemed to see in the future some overwhelming misfortune.

Now, in my prison, I recalled this alarm and anguish; I remembered with painful distinctness, all that my parents, three months before, had said to me, and the touching complaint of my mother, "Ah! our Silvio has not come to Turin to see us!" fell heavily upon my heart. I reproached myself for not having shown a thousand times more tenderness for them. I loved them so much, and had expressed it to them so coldly! I was to see them no more, and had feasted myself so little with the happiness of beholding their dear features! I had been so sparing in the manifestations of my love! These thoughts rent my soul.

I closed the window and walked for an hour, expecting no rest during the night. I cast myself upon the bed and slept from fatigue.

CHAPTER III.

The waking which follows the first night in prison, is horrible! "Is it possible," said I, recollecting where I was—"can it be that I am here? and is it not a dream? It is but too true that yesterday I was arrested; yesterday I was subjected to a long examination, which will continue to-day, to-morrow—until when? God only knows. It was last night before going to sleep, that I wept so much at the remembrance of my family."

The rest, the perfect silence, the short sleep that had recruited my internal strength, seemed to have increased in me a hundred fold the power of my grief. In this total absence of everything that could engage my mind, the affliction which my friends would experience, and particularly my father and mother, at the news of my arrest, impressed itself on my mind with incredible force.

"At this very moment," thought I, "they are sleeping in tranquillity; or if they are awake, they are perhaps thinking of me with tenderness, far, alas! from suspecting where I am. Too happy, if God should remove them from this world before the news of my calamity reaches them! Who will give them the strength to support such a blow?"

A voice from within seemed to reply: "He whom all the afflicted love, invoke, and feel in themselves! who once gave a mother strength to follow her son to Golgotha, and remain at the foot of his cross! the Friend of unfortunate and suffering humanity!"

That was the first moment that religion triumphed in my heart, and it is to filial love that I am indebted for this inestimable gift.

Heretofore, without being opposed to religion, I cultivated it little and badly. The objections commonly used to combat it, appeared to me to have little weight; and yet

Digitized by Google

a thousand sophistical doubts weakened my faith. For a long time I had entertained no doubt concerning the existence of a God, and was continually repeating to myself that if God exist, a necessary consequence of his justice, is another life for the man who suffers in this unjust world; whence arises the important obligation of aspiring to the happiness of that life to come; whence springs a religion founded upon the love of God and our neighbor, and that eternal striving of the soul to rise to excellence by generous and noble sacrifices. I had long said all this to myself, and added: "What, then, is Christianity, but this constant reaching after the exaltation of the soul?" And I asked myself with astonishment, how it was that Christianity exhibiting itself so pure in its principles, so well adapted to our nature, so impregnable, an age could arrive when philosophy dared to say: "I will henceforth assume the office of Christianity." And how wilt thou discharge it? In teaching vice? "No, indeed." In inculcating virtue? Very well; that will be the love of God and man, precisely what Christianity teaches.

Reasoning in this manner for several years, I avoided coming to the conclusion: be consistent then; become a Christian; be not deterred by some abuses; do not refine too much upon some difficult points of church doctrine, since the main point is sufficiently clear: love God and thy neighbor.

In my prison I at length decided to draw this conclusion, and I did so. I hesitated a moment at the thought, that if any one came to know me more religious than I had been heretofore, he might arrogate to himself the right to treat me as a false devotee, or as a man degraded by misfortune. But possessing a consciousness that I was neither the one nor the other, I disregarded reproaches that I did not deserve, and remained firm in the resolution of being, and of henceforth declaring myself, a Christian.

CHAPTER IV.

It was some time later that I came to a determined stand in this resolution; but I began to revolve it in my mind from that first night of my captivity. Towards morning my mad transports subsided; I was surprised at it. I still thought of my parents and all those that I loved, but with no more apprehensions about their fortitude of soul; the remembrance of their virtuous principles which I had seen exhibited under other trials, returned to console me.

Why was I, a little while ago, so much overcome at the thought of their grief? yet why do I now feel such confidence in the strength of their courage? Was this happy change a miracle? or was it the natural effect of my reanimated belief in God? Well, miracle or not, it matters little what name we give to the real and sublime benefits of religion.

At midnight, two secondini (a name given to under jailers, or turnkeys) had been to see me, and had found me in a very bad humor. At day-break they returned and found my countenance serene, and my reception kind.

"Last night, sir," said Tirola, "you had the look of a basilisk—now you appear another man, and I am glad of it; it is a proof that you are not—pardon the expression—a malefactor; because villains (I am old in the business, and my observations have some weight) are more furious the second day of their confinement than the first. Do you take snuff?"

"I am not in the habit of it, but I will not refuse what you offer with such kind politeness. As to your observation, pardon me, it is not worthy of a man of such observation as you appear to be. If, this morning, I had no longer the look of a basilisk, could not this change be on my part a proof of insanity, or the effect of self-deception, a dream of approaching liberty?"

"I could believe it if you were in prison for other reasons; but I can scarcely believe that these affairs of state will be brought to a termination in so short a time, and you are not so simple as to imagine it. Excuse the liberty, will you take another pinch?"

Digitized by Google

"Thank you. But how can you look so cheerful, when you pass your whole time among the unhappy?"

"You will, perhaps, think it is from indifference to the miseries of others: to tell the truth, I do not know the reason myself; but I assure you, it has often given me pain to see others weep. And then I pretend to be merry, so that they may smile also, the poor prisoners!"

An idea had just struck me, which I never had before. It is that a man can follow the occupation of a jailer, and still have a very good heart.

"The business has nothing to do with it, sir. Beyond that arch that you can see on the other side of the court, there is another court and other prisons, entirely occupied by females; they are—I scarcely know how to say it—women of bad life. No matter; some of them are angels in heart. And if you were a *secondino*"—

"Me?" and I burst into a laugh.

Tirola seemed rather disconcerted by my laughing, and did not finish his sentence. He intended, perhaps, to say, that if I had been a *secondino*, it would have been difficult for me not to become attached to some one of those unfortunate creatures.

He asked me what I wished for breakfast; he went out, and a few minutes after, brought me some coffee.

I looked at him steadily in the face, with an equivocal smile, which meant to say: "Could you carry a note for me to another unhappy man, my dear friend Piero?" And he replied to me by another smile which seemed to say, "No, sir; and if you solicit any other of my fellow jailers, and he answers you 'yes,' be assured that he will betray you."

I am not perfectly certain that he understood me, or that I did him. But I well know that I was a dozen times on the point of asking for a bit of paper and a pencil, and durst not do it, because he had something in his eyes, I know not what, which seemed to warn me against trusting anybody, and least of all, any one but him.

CHAPTER V.

If Tirola, with his expression of kindness, had not had certain sinister looks, if he had had a more engaging physiognomy, I should have yielded to the temptation of making him my messenger. And, perhaps, a note from me to my friend, in season, would have given him the means of repairing some mistake, and might have perhaps saved, not him, my poor friend! he was already but too much discovered! but many others and myself!

Patience, things were to be so.

I was summoned anew to the examination; and it lasted all that day and many others, without any interval but that of meals.

As long as the trial continued, the days, to me, passed rapidly; thanks to the activity of mind which compelled me to answer, without end, questions the most unconnected and diverse. At the hours of repast, and during the evening, I endeavored to compose my thoughts for reflection, upon all the questions which had been asked me, what answers I had given, and prepare myself upon all the points concerning which I should probably be further interrogated.

At the end of the first week, an event occurred which gave me great pain. My poor friend, Piero, as anxious as I was myself to establish some communication between us, wrote me a letter, and employed to convey it to me, not one of the *secondini*, but an unhappy prisoner, who usually came with them to perform the duty of a servant in our rooms. He was a man of sixty or seventy years, condemned to, I know not how many months of imprisonment.

With a pin that I had, I pricked my finger, and wrote with my blood, a few lines in reply, which I sent back by the same messenger. He had the ill fortune to be detected; the billet was found upon him, and if I am not mistaken, he was flogged. I heard frightful cries, which appeared to come from the old man, and I never saw him again.

When I was summoned to the bar, I shuddered at seeing presented to me, the note I had scribbled with my blood, which, thank Heaven, could injure no one, and had

Digitized by Google

the air of a mere expression of civility. They asked me with what I had drawn that blood; they took away my pin, and laughed at our detection. For myself I did not laugh, I could not banish from my eyes the image of our aged messenger. I would have submitted, cheerfully, to any chastisement whatever, provided they had pardoned him; and when I heard those cries which I believed to be his, I was melted even to tears.

I asked the jailer and the *secondini* several times about him, but in vain. They shook their heads and said: "He has paid dear for it. He will not do it again. He is rather more quiet now." And refused to explain further.

Did they intend to signify by that, the narrow prison where the unhappy man was confined, or to give me to understand that he had died under the blows of the stick, or in consequence of them?

I thought I saw him one day, on the other side of the court, under the portico, with a load of wood upon his shoulders, and my heart beat as if I had seen a brother.

CHAPTER VI.

When I ceased to be subjected to the martyrdom of their examinations, I had no more occupation; I felt most bitterly the weight of solitude.

I was allowed, indeed, to have a Bible and a copy of Dante; and the jailer kindly offered me the use of his library, containing some romances of Scuderi, Piazzi, and others still worse; but the agitation of my mind was such as to unfit me for any reading whatever. I committed to memory, each day, a canto of Dante; but this exercise was so entirely mechanical that my thoughts were much less occupied with his beautiful lines, than with my own misfortunes. It was the same when I read anything else, excepting some passages in the Bible. This divine book, which I had always much loved, even when I thought myself an unbeliever, I now studied with more veneration than ever. But yet, very often, I read it with my mind pre-occupied, and therefore was unable to comprehend it. By degrees I came to meditate upon it more profoundly, and to relish it more and more. That reading never gave me the slightest disposition to bigotry, that is to say, to that ill understood devotion which makes its possessor a coward or a fanatic. But it taught me to love God and man, ever to desire the reign of justice, to abhor iniquity, and to pardon those who commit it. Christianity, instead of destroying in me what good philosophy had effected, confirmed and fortified it with nobler and more powerful arguments.

Having read, one day, that we ought to pray without ceasing, and that true prayer consists not in muttering a great many words as heathens do, but in adoring God in simplicity, as well in words as in actions; endeavoring to make both the accomplishment of his holy will, I purposed earnestly to commence that incessant prayer, that is to say, no longer to allow myself a single thought which was not animated by the desire of conforming to the dispensations of Providence.

The forms of prayer which I used in my devotions, were always few in number, not indeed, from dislike (for I am even convinced that they are useful, to some more, to others less, in fixing the attention), but because I find myself so constituted that I am incapable of reciting long prayers, without wandering to some other subjects, and forgetting my pious occupation.

The desire of holding myself continually in the presence of God, far from being a fatiguing effort of mind, or a cause of trembling, had for me an ineffable sweetness. Not forgetting that God is always with us, that he is in us, or rather that we are in him; solitude lost, each day, some of its horrors for me: "Am I not in the best company," said I to myself, and I sung and whistled with pleasure and tenderness.

"Well!" thought I, "a fever might have carried me to the grave. All my dear friends, who would have abandoned themselves to tears at my loss, would nevertheless have ac-

Digitized by Google

quired the strength to bear their affliction. Instead of a tomb, a prison has swallowed me up. Ought I not to believe that God will give them the same strength now?"

My heart raised to Heaven for them the most ardent wishes, sometimes accompanied with tears; but even those tears were mingled with sweetness. I had the fullest confidence that God would come to their aid and mine, and I was not mistaken.

CHAPTER VII.

To live in freedom is much more pleasant than to live in prison. Who can doubt it? And yet, amid the miseries of a prison, when one thinks that God is there, that the joys of this world are fleeting, that true happiness exists in the conscience, and not in outward objects, life has still some charms. Ere a month had elapsed, I had resigned myself to my lot, if not perfectly, at least in a degree quite supportable. Not willing to purchase impunity by the ruin of others, I saw that my future lot must be, either the scaffold or a long imprisonment. It was necessary to submit to it. "I will breathe," said I to myself, "as long as a breath shall be left me, and when that is taken away, I will do like all sick persons in their last moments—I will die."

I endeavored to complain of nothing, but to give my soul all possible enjoyments. The most common was the frequent enumeration of all the blessings which had embellished my life; the best of fathers and the best of mothers, excellent brothers and sisters, such and such people for friends, a good education, the love of letters, &c. Who had been favored more than myself? Although that happiness is now clouded by adversity, shall I not thank God? Sometimes, while making this enumeration, I was subdued to tenderness for a moment, and wept; but my courage and cheerfulness soon returned.

In the very beginning of my captivity I had made a friend. It was neither the jailer, nor one of the *secondini*, nor any of the persons who conducted my trial. Nevertheless I speak of a human creature. Who was it, then? A deaf and dumb child, five or six years old. His father and mother were culprits upon whom the law had laid its grasp. The wretched orphan was supported at the public expense, together with several other children of the same condition. They all occupied a single chamber in front of mine, and at certain hours the doors were thrown open, that they might go out and take the air in the yard.

The deaf and dumb boy came under my window smiling and making signs of friendship. I threw him a fine piece of bread, he seized it, and leaping with joy, ran to distribute it among all his companions; after which he returned to eat his own small portion under my window, expressing his gratitude by the smile of his beautiful eyes.

The other children eyed me from a distance, yet did not dare to approach. The deaf and dumb child had a great sympathy for me, which was not excited by interest alone. Sometimes not knowing what to do with the bread which I threw him, he signified to me that he and his comrades had eaten enough, and could swallow no more. If he saw a *secondini* going to my chamber, he gave him the bread, that he might return it to me; and although he expected nothing from me, yet he continued no less to play about under my window, with a most attractive grace, appearing happy because I was looking at him. On one occasion, a *secondini* permitted the child to come in my prison; he had scarcely entered when he ran and threw his arms round my legs, at the same time uttering a cry of joy. I took him in my arms, and cannot express with what transport he overwhelmed me with caresses. What love in that dear little soul! How I wished that I could give him an education, and rescue him from the degradation in which I found him.

I never learned his name; he himself did not know that he had one. He was always merry, and I never saw him cry but once,

Digitized by Google

when he was whipped, I do not know why, by the jailer. Strange thing! to live in such a place appears the height of misery, and yet this child certainly enjoyed as much happiness as the son of a prince of the same age could have done. I made these observations, and learned that the disposition can become independent of the place of residence. Let us govern our imagination and we shall be comfortable almost anywhere. A day soon passes by, and when at night we go to rest, without hunger and acute pains, what matters it whether that be in a place which we name a prison, or in another which is called a mansion or a palace?

Excellent reasoning! but how to manage to govern this imagination? I made the attempt, and sometimes thought that I had succeeded admirably; but at other times it triumphed over me like a tyrant, and then, to my confusion, I remained perfectly confounded at my own weakness.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is a redeeming circumstance in my misfortune, that they have given me a prison on a level with the ground, upon this court where, within four steps of me, comes that dear child with whom it is so sweet to converse, although by signs. Wonderful human intelligence! How many things do we say to each other, by means of the various expressions of look and countenance! With how much grace he directs his motions when I smile at him! How he corrects them when he sees that they displease me! How he comprehends that I love him, when he caresses or regales any of his companions! Nobody in the world would imagine it, yet I, standing at my window, can be a kind of instructor of this poor little creature. By dint of frequently exercising these signs, the means of communicating our ideas to each other will be perfected. The more he perceives that he is instructed and improved with me, the more he will love me; I shall be for him the genius of reason and kindness. He will learn to confide to me his griefs, his joys, his desires; and I shall learn to console him, to ennoble his mind, and to direct him in all his conduct. Who knows whether they, by leaving my fate undecided from month to month, will not leave me to grow old in this place? Who knows if this child may not grow up under my eyes, and be hereafter appointed to some service in this establishment? With as much mind as he appears to have, to what will he arrive? Alas! nothing more than a very good *secondino*, or something else of that sort. Well! shall I not have done a good action in contributing to inspire him with the desire of pleasing good people and himself, and in giving him the habit of benevolent feelings.

This soliloquy was very natural. I always had a great liking for children, and the office of instructor appeared to me sublime. I had filled, for several years, the office of tutor to Giacomo and Giulio Porro, two youths of great promise, whom I loved, and shall always love as if they were my own sons. God knows how many times, in prison, I have thought of them! How many times I have grieved that I could not complete their education, and what ardent wishes I have formed that they may meet with a new master who would equal me in love for them.

Sometimes I exclaimed to myself: "What a pitiful contrast! Instead of Giacomo and Giulio, children endowed with the most brilliant gifts of nature and fortune, fate sends me, for a pupil, a poor deaf and dumb boy in rags, and the son of a thief! who will become, at the most, a *secondino*, which, in terms less choice, means a *sbiro* (turnkey)."

These reflections confounded and discouraged me; but as soon as I heard the piercing cry of my little mute, I felt all my blood moved, as a father who hears the voice of his son. And that cry and sight dissipated, in me, all idea of abasement in regard to him. Is it his fault that he is ragged, that his organs are imperfect, and that he is of a race of robbers? A human soul in the age of innocence, is always worthy of respect. Thus I spoke, and regarded him each day with more

Digitized by Google

tenderness. He appeared to me to grow in intelligence, and I was more and more confirmed in the pleasing idea of applying myself to his improvement. Fancying in my mind all that could happen, I thought that perhaps one day, being out of prison, I might find the means of placing that child in a deaf and dumb asylum, and thus open to him the way to a condition more desirable than that of a *sbiro*.

Whilst I was occupying myself so deliciously with his happiness, two *secondini* came one day to take me.

"We must change your room, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"We have received orders to put you into another room."

"Why?"

"Some other big bird has been caught, and this room being the best—you understand."

"I comprehend, this is the first station of new-comers."

They conducted me to the opposite side of the court, alas! it was no longer on the ground floor, I could no more converse with my little mute. In crossing the court I saw the dear little fellow seated upon the ground, surprised and sad; he understood that he was losing me. In an instant he rose and ran to meet me; the *secondini* endeavored to drive him away, but I took him in my arms, and dirty as he was, kissed him again and again, with emotion, and tore myself from him, shall I say it—with my eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER IX.

My poor heart, thou lovest so easily and so ardently! Yet to how many separations hast thou already been condemned? This was certainly not the least painful, and I felt it the more because my new lodging was very gloomy. A mean, dirty, dark room, its single window garnished with paper instead of glass. Its walls were disfigured with vile pictures, made of a color I dare not mention; the unpainted places were covered with inscriptions. Many of these denoted the name, surname, and country, of some unfortunate man, together with the date of the sad day of his imprisonment. To some were appended imprecations against false friends, against themselves, against a wife, against their judges, &c. Others were short biographies, and others again contained moral sentences. I noticed these words of Pascal:

"Let those who combat religion, learn, at least, what it is, before they combat it. If it boasted of having a clear view of God, and possessing him unveiled, it would be combating it to say that we see nothing in the world which manifests him with such evidence; but since it says, on the contrary, that men are in darkness, and remote from God, that he is concealed from their knowledge, and that is precisely the name that he has given himself in the Scriptures—*Deus absconditus* . . . What advantage can they draw, when, in the negligence with which they profess to seek after truth, they declare that nothing shows it to them?"

A little below were these words, from the same author:

"The question, here, is not one of slight interest about other persons, it regards ourselves and our all. The immortality of the soul is a thing which concerns us so strongly, and touches us so deeply, that it is necessary to have lost all feeling, to be indifferent about knowing its importance!"

Another inscription said:

"Blessed be my prison, since it has taught the ingratitude of men, my own wretchedness, and the goodness of God."

By the side of these humble words, were the most violent and proud imprecations of one who calls himself an Atheist, and who railed against God as if he had forgotten that he had just said, there is no God.

After a column of such blasphemies, came another of abuses against cowards,—so he calls those whom the sufferings of a prison make religious.

I showed these wicked effusions to one of the *secondini*, and asked him who wrote them.

Digitized by Google

"I am very glad to have found this inscription," said he, "there are so many, and I have so little time to look for them!"

And, without saying more, he began, at once, to erase it from the wall, with his knife.

"What is that for?" said I.

"Because the poor fellow who wrote it, and was condemned to death, for premeditated murder, repented, and begged me to render him this service."

"God forgive him!" I exclaimed, "what murder did he commit?"

"Not being able to destroy his enemy, he avenged himself by killing his son, the most beautiful child in the world."

I shuddered. Can ferocity go to such lengths; and such a monster hold the language of a man, superior to all human weaknesses! *Kill* an innocent being! a child!

CHAPTER X.

In this new room, so dark and filthy, deprived of the company of my dear mute, I was oppressed with sadness; I passed whole hours at my window, which looked out upon a piazza, above which were to be seen the extremity of the court, and the window of my former room. Who had succeeded me in it? I saw a man walking with the rapid step of one deeply agitated. Two or three days after, I perceived that he had obtained writing materials, and then he remained the whole day at his table.

At length I recognized *him:* he was coming out of his room, accompanied by the jailer, and was going to the examination; it was Melchiore Gioja!

My heart shrunk with pain. And thou, also, worthy man, art here! (He was more fortunate than myself, for, after a short imprisonment, he was restored to liberty.)

The sight of any good being consoles me, calls forth my affection and makes me think. Ah! to think and love are great blessings! I would have given my life to rescue Gioja from prison, and yet the regret of him gave me comfort.

After spending some time in regarding him, and conjecturing by his motions whether his mind was tranquil or disturbed, and forming wishes for him, I felt stronger, richer in ideas, and more satisfied with myself. This shows that the sight of a human being, for whom one feels affection, is sufficient to relieve the tedium of solitude. A poor mute had first given me this consolation, and I now derived it from the sight, although distant, of a man of great merit.

Doubtless some *secondino* told him where I was. Opening his window, one morning, he waved his handkerchief by way of salutation. I answered him by the same sign. Oh! with what pleasure was my soul inundated at that moment. It seemed to me that the distance between us had vanished, and we were together. My heart palpitated like that of a lover who meets his beloved. We made gestures without understanding each other, yet with as much earnestness as if we were understood; we did, in fact, comprehend each other—these gestures expressed all that our souls felt, and each knew the feelings of the other.

Oh! how much comfort these signs seemed to promise me in future. But the future came and they were not repeated. It was in vain that I shook my handkerchief every time I saw Gioja at his window. The *secondini* informed me that he had been forbidden to provoke and answer my signals. Nevertheless, he often looked at me, and I at him, and thus we could still express many things.

CHAPTER XI.

Along the piazza, which was under my window, on a level with my room, other prisoners, accompanied by a *secondino*, passed and repassed from morning to night. They were going to and returning from their examination. They were mostly people of the lower class. Nevertheless, I saw some who

Digitized by Google

appeared to be of better condition. Although they passed so quickly that I could not observe them well, they attracted my attention, and all more or less interested me. This sad spectacle, for the first few days, increased my anguish; but, by degrees, I grew accustomed to it, and at last it served to diminish the horrors of my solitude. Many females, likewise, passed under my eyes, who had been arrested. They went from this piazza, through an arch, into another court, where were the prisons and hospital for women.

A single wall, quite thin, separated me from one of the rooms of these women. These poor creatures often deafened me with their songs, and sometimes with their quarrels. And, at evening, when the noise had ceased, I heard them conversing together.

If I had wished to enter into conversation with them, I could have done so; but I refrained, I knew not why. Was it timidity, pride, or a prudent caution about attaching myself to degraded women? It was, I believe, all these considerations put together. Woman, when she is such as she ought to be, is to me a being so exalted! To see her, to hear her, to speak to her, fills my mind with noble images; but, when vile and debased, she disturbs, afflicts, and disenchants my heart.

But (these *buts* are quite indispensable in painting man, a being so complex) among these females' voices, were some very sweet, and these, why not say it? were dear to me; one, especially, sweeter than the rest, was more seldom heard, and never expressed vulgar thoughts. She sung a little, and generally these two touching lines:

"Chi rende alla meschina
La sua felicità?"

"Who to the wretched will restore
The bliss that once was hers?"

Sometimes she chanted the litany: her companions assisted her, but I could recognize the voice of Magdalen among the rest, who always seemed determined to ravish it from me.

Yes, this unfortunate woman was called Magdalen. When one of her companions related her misfortunes to her, she sympathized and wept with her, repeating: "Courage, my dear, the Lord forsakes nobody."

What could prevent me from imagining her handsome, and more unfortunate than guilty; born for virtue; capable of returning to it, if she had abandoned it? Who could blame me for being affected by her voice, for listening to it with respect, for praying for her with peculiar fervor?

Innocence demands our respect, but how much more does repentance! Did the best of men, the God man, disdain to cast a look of compassion upon sinful women, to respect their confusion, and to place them in the number of souls which he honored most? Why have we so much scorn for woman when fallen into disgrace?

Reflecting thus, I was a hundred times tempted to raise my voice, and make a declaration of paternal love to Magdalen. One day I had commenced the first syllable of her name: "Mag."—strange thing! my heart throbbed like that of a lover of fifteen, yet I was thirty-one; which is not the age for childish palpitations.

I could go no further. I began again: "Mag.—Mag."—it was useless. I seemed ridiculous, and cried out in a rage: "*Matto!*" (fool) and not Mag.!

CHAPTER XII.

Thus ended my romance with that unfortunate female, but, for several weeks, I was indebted to her for most agreeable feelings. I was often melancholy, and her voice cheered me; often while thinking of the baseness and ingratitude of men, I was mad against them—I embraced the whole universe in my hatred—but then the voice of Magdalen led me back to pity and indulgence.

Oh! couldst thou not, unknown sinner, have been condemned to a punishment too severe; or whatever be thy sufferings, couldst thou at least profit by them, so as to elevate thyself,

Digitized by Google

to live and die dear to the Saviour! Couldst thou be pitied and respected by all those who knew thee, as thou hast been by me who knew thee not! Couldst thou inspire in all who see thee, patience, gentleness, the desire of virtue, confidence in God, as thou didst inspire them in him who loved thee unseen! My imagination may have erred in investing thee with a beautiful body, but thy soul, I am sure, was lovely. Thy companions spoke indelicately, but thou, always with modesty and politeness; they blasphemed God, and thou didst bless Him; they quarrelled and thou wast a peacemaker among them. Ah! if some one has stretched a hand to snatch thee from the career of dishonor; if he has conferred his benefit with delicacy, and wiped away thy tears, may all blessings be showered upon him, upon his children, and his children's children.

Near my own cell was another occupied by several men. I also heard them converse. One of them had acquired great authority over the others, not that he was of a superior condition, but because he had more audacity and boldness. As the saying is, he acted the doctor: he quarrelled and imposed silence upon his antagonist, by the imperious tone of his voice, and the clamor of his words. He dictated to them what they should think and feel; and they, after some resistance, ended by yielding to him in everything.

Wretched men! there was not one among them who alleviated the tedium of a prison by expressing a single tender sentiment, a single thought of religion and of love!

The chief of these, my neighbors, saluted me, and I answered him. He asked how I stood that *cursed life?* I answered that, for me, no life was cursed, however sad it might be, and that the enjoyment of thinking and loving should be sought for until death.

"Explain yourself, sir, explain yourself."

I did so, but was not understood. And, when after some ingenious preliminaries, I ventured to adduce as an example, the lively tenderness which the voice of Magdalen had produced in me, the chief burst into a violent fit of laughter.

"What is it? what is it?" exclaimed his companions.

The profane man reported my words, distorting them for the purpose of ridicule; shouts of laughter burst forth in full chorus, and I cut the figure of a complete fool.

It is the same thing in prison as in the world: they who rest their wisdom upon fretting, complaining, and vilifying others, regard as foolishness, the feelings of love and pity, and the need of consoling ourselves by those noble powers of imagination, which honor humanity and its Author.

CHAPTER XIII.

I LET them laugh on without saying a word. Two or three times they spoke to me, but I remained silent.

"He must have left his window. He must have gone. He must be listening to Magdalen's sighs. He must have been offended by our laughing."

They went on talking for a short time, when at length the chief imposed silence upon the others who were amusing themselves at my expense.

"Silence, you brutes, you don't know what you are talking about. Our neighbor is not such an ass as you think. You are incapable of reflecting upon anything. For myself, I laugh at first, but afterwards I reflect. All detestable scoundrels know how to act like madmen as well as we do. But a little more pleasant cheerfulness, a little more charity, a little more confidence in the goodness of Providence, frankly now, in your opinion, what does that indicate?"

"Now that I reflect also," answered one of them, "it seems to me to be a sign that the man is somewhat less of a ruffian than we are."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the chief, in a stentorian voice; "now, I begin to have some esteem for thy cabbage-head."

I did not pride myself much on being con-

Digitized by Google

sidered only *somewhat less of a rascal* than these fellows; and yet I felt a kind of joy that such degraded men recognized the importance of cultivating benevolent feelings.

I rattled the window-sash as if I had returned to it. The chief called to me; I answered him, hoping that he was desirous of moralizing after my own manner. I was mistaken: vulgar minds banish serious reflection; if a noble truth breaks upon them, they are capable of applauding it a moment; but they soon turn their attention away from it, and cannot resist the desire of showing their wit, by casting the truth into doubt, or turning it into ridicule.

He asked me if I was in prison for debt.

"No."

"Perhaps, accused of theft? accused falsely, understand."

"I am accused of quite a different thing."

"Some love affair?"

"No."

"Murder?"

"No."

"*Carboneria?*"

"Precisely."

"And who are these *Carbonari?*"

"I know so little of them that I cannot describe them."

A *secondino*, in a violent rage, interrupted us, and after loading my neighbors with abuse, he turned to me, with more of the gravity of a master than of a *sbiro*, and said: "It is shameful, sir, to stoop to converse with all sorts of people! Do you know that these men are thieves?"

I blushed, and then I blushed again for having blushed, for it seemed to me that to condescend to converse with all classes of the unhappy, is rather an act of kindness than a fault.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next morning I placed myself at the window to see Melchiore Gioja, but conversed no more with the thieves. I replied to their salutation, but told them I had been forbidden to talk.

The registrar who had questioned me at my examinations, came in to announce to me, in a mysterious manner, a visit that would give me pleasure. When he thought me sufficiently prepared, he said, "It is your father, please to follow me."

I followed him below into the offices, palpitating with joy and tenderness; yet forcing myself to assume an air of calmness which might tranquillize my poor father.

When he received information of my arrest, he hoped it had taken place upon suspicions of little weight, and that I would soon be restored to liberty. But seeing that my detention was prolonged, he had come to solicit the Austrian government for my release. Lamentable illusion of paternal love! He could not believe that I had been rash enough to expose myself to the rigor of the laws; and the studied cheerfulness with which I spoke, persuaded him that I had no misfortune to fear.

The short conversation which was allowed us, agitated me inexpressibly; the more so, that I strove to conceal all appearance of agitation. It was the greatest difficulty not to manifest it when it became necessary to separate.

In the circumstances in which Italy then was, I felt convinced that Austria would give some extraordinary examples of rigor, and that I should be condemned to death or many years of imprisonment. To conceal this conviction from my father! to delude him with the false hope of soon regaining my liberty! Not to burst into tears in embracing him, while speaking of my mother, of my brothers and sisters, whom I expected never to see again upon earth! To beg him with an unfaltering voice to come and see me again if he could! No. I never did such violence to my feelings.

He left me quite consoled, while I returned to my prison with a bruised heart. When I found myself alone, I hoped to find relief in giving way to tears. This solace failed me. I was convulsed with sobs, but could not shed a tear. The pain of not being able

Digitized by Google

to weep, is, in great misfortunes, one of the most cruel sufferings; and oh! how many times I have experienced it!

I was seized with a burning fever and a violent head-ache. During the whole day I was unable to swallow even a drop of broth. "Would that this sickness were mortal," I exclaimed, "which might abbreviate my torments."

Foolish and cowardly desire! God did not grant it, and now I thank him for it; I thank him not only because, after ten years of imprisonment, I have again beheld my dear family and can call myself happy, but because suffering adds worth to man, and I am willing to hope that mine has not been useless to me.

CHAPTER XV.

Two days after, my father returned. I had slept well during the night, and was without fever. I put on a calm countenance and a cheerful air, and nobody suspected what my heart had suffered, and was still suffering.

"I trust," said my father, "that within a few days you will be sent back to Turin. We have already prepared your room, and are expecting you with great anxiety. The duties of my situation oblige me to return. Make an effort, I beg you, to rejoin me soon."

His gentle and melancholy tenderness wrung my heart. Dissimulation seemed to be enjoined upon me by filial piety, yet I dissembled with a kind of remorse. It had been more worthy of my father and myself if I had said to him, "It is probable that we shall see each other no more in this world! Let us part like men, without a murmur and without complaint. Let me hear you pronounce a paternal benediction upon my head."

This language would have been a thousand times more suitable to me than that of dissimulation, but I looked at the eyes of the venerable old man, at his features and his grey hair, and it seemed to me that the unhappy old man had not strength enough to hear such things.

And if, through my unwillingness to deceive him, I had seen him giving up to despair, perhaps fainting away, perhaps (horrible idea!) falling dead in my arms!

I could not then tell him the truth, nor even let him discover it. My feigned serenity completely deceived him. We parted without tears. But having returned to my prison I was a prey to the same anguish, and even more violent than at his first visit; in vain did I invoke the gift of tears.

To resign myself to all the horrors of a long imprisonment, to the scaffold, was not above my strength; but to resign myself to the overwhelming affliction which my father, mother, brothers and sisters were about to experience, alas! my strength was not adequate to this.

I prostrated myself upon the earth, and with a fervor which I had never felt, I uttered this prayer: "My God, I accept all at thy hand; but fortify so strongly those hearts to which I was necessary, that I may cease to be so, and let none of their lives be, on this account, shortened a single day."

Oh, the benefit of prayer! I remained many hours with my mind elevated to God and my confidence increased, in proportion as I meditated upon the divine goodness, in proportion as I meditated upon the grandeur of the human soul when stripped of its selfishness, and when it forces itself to have no other will than that of Infinite Wisdom.

Yes, it can be so, and such is the duty of man. Reason, which is the voice of God, reason says that we ought to sacrifice everything to virtue. And shall we accomplish this sacrifice which we owe to it, if, in our greatest afflictions, we strive against the will of Him who is the source of all virtue? When the gibbet or any other species of martyrdom is inevitable, to fear it like a coward, and not to know how to walk to it blessing the Lord, is the index of miserable degradation or ignorance. We ought not only to consent to our own death, but also to the affliction which those who love us, must feel. All that is permitted us to ask of God,

Digitized by Google

is to temper it, to come to the aid of each of us; such a prayer is always answered.

CHAPTER XVI.

Many days passed by and I remained in the same state; that is, in a sweet sadness, full of peace and religious thoughts. I seemed to have triumphed over all weakness and to be no longer accessible to any disquietude. Foolish illusion! Man ought to strive after perfect constancy, but he never attains it upon earth. What could have disturbed me? The sight of an unhappy friend—of my good Piero, who passed at a little distance from me, on the piazza, while I was at the window. He had been dragged from his home to be conducted to the criminal prison. He and those who attended him passed so quickly that I had scarcely time to recognize him and return his salutation.

Poor young man! in the flower of his age, with a genius of splendid promise, a character honorable; delicate, affectionate, formed to enjoy life gloriously, to be thrown into prison for political reasons, at a time when it was almost impossible to escape the terrible thunderbolts of the law!

I felt such compassion for him, I had such a lively sorrow that I could not save him, nor even console him by my presence and my words, that nothing availed to restore me to calmness. I knew how much he loved his mother, his brother, his sisters, his brother-in-law, and his little nephews; how much he desired to contribute to their happiness; how much he was beloved by all these dear objects, and I felt what must be the affliction of each of them in so great a calamity. No terms can express the frenzy which then took possession of me; and this paroxysm lasted so long that I despaired of ever appeasing it. Even this fear was an illusion. O ye afflicted, who think yourselves a prey to an insurmountable, horrible, and ever increasing grief, have a little patience and you will be undeceived. Neither extreme calmness nor extreme disquietude can last a long time. It behooves us to be persuaded of this truth, in order to prevent us from becoming insolent in the hour of prosperity, and dejected in that of adversity.

Lassitude and apathy succeeded this long paroxysm of rage. But the apathy did not last long, and I feared lest in future I should alternate without repose between this and the opposite extreme. I shuddered at the prospect of such a future, and again had recourse to ardent prayer.

I besought God to assist my unhappy Piero as well as myself, and his family as well as my own. It was only in repeating these aspirations that I obtained real tranquillity.

CHAPTER XVII.

When my mind had become calm, I reflected upon the fury to which I had been a prey, and angry at myself on account of my weakness, I studied the means of curing it. Behold the expedient which I employed for that purpose. Each morning my first occupation, after a short prayer to the Creator, was to make a diligent and courageous examination of every possible event, which was capable of disturbing me. I fixed my imagination steadily upon each of them and prepared myself for it. From the dearest visit to that of the executioner, I imagined all. For several days this sad exercise appeared insupportable, but I endeavored to persevere, and soon I had reason to be glad of it.

On the first day of the year 1821, Count Luigi Porro obtained permission to come to see me. The tender and warm friendship which united us, the desire we felt of saying so many things, the hindrance to the outpouring of our hearts caused by the presence of a sheriff, the little time permitted us to remain together, the dark presentiments which beset me, the efforts which we both made to appear tranquil, all this seemed sufficient to

Digitized by Google

raise the most violent storm in my heart. But when separated from this dear friend, I felt deeply touched, yet calm.

Such is the power we gain by fortifying ourselves against strong emotions.

My effort to acquire a constant calmness did not proceed so much from the desire of diminishing my unhappiness as from the feeling that disquietude is an indication of weakness, and unworthy of a man. A mind in agitation ceases to reason; wrapped in an irresistible whirlwind of exaggerated ideas it forms to itself a blind, mad, and perverse logic; it is in a state absolutely anti-philosophical and anti-christian.

If I were a preacher, I would insist frequently upon the necessity of banishing inquietude; one cannot be good short of this. How much at peace with himself and with all others, was He whom we all ought to imitate! There can be neither greatness of soul nor justice without moderation in our ideas, and a mind disposed rather to smile at than to quarrel with the events of this short life. Anger is never useful except in those extremely rare cases in which one may hope by its means to humble a transgressor and withdraw him from iniquity.

There are, perhaps, irritations of a different nature from any with which I am acquainted, and which are less blameable; but that to which I had hitherto been the slave was not an irritation caused by mere affliction; there was always mingled with it much hatred, a great desire to curse, and to paint society, or this or that individual, in the most odious colors. True epidemic of this world! Man esteems himself better when he hates his fellows. All friends seem to whisper to each other in confidence: "Let us love only among ourselves; let us proclaim that others are but vile plebeians, and then we shall appear demi-gods."

Strange thing! that men should find in passion so many attractions. They even bring to it a kind of heroism. If the object which they hated yesterday happens to die, they immediately look about for another. "Of whom shall I complain to-day? Whom shall I hate? Who shall be the monster? O joy! I have found him! Come, friends, let us tear him to pieces."

Thus goes the world, and without slandering it, I can truly say that it goes badly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was no great malice in me to complain of the horrid room to which they had consigned me. Fortunately a better one soon became vacant, and they afforded me the agreeable surprise of giving it to me.

Ought I not to have been much pleased at the news? And yet, so it was, I could not think of Magdalen without regret. What childishness, to attach one's self always to something, yet, in truth, with scarcely any reason whatever. In leaving that wretched cell I once more turned my eyes towards the wall against which I had so often leaned, whilst a foot distant, perhaps the poor sinner was leaning against the other side. I wanted to hear once more those two lines so touching:

"Chi rende alla meschina
La sua felicità?"

"Who to the wretched will restore
The bliss that once was hers?"

Vain desire! It was one separation more in my unhappy life. I will not speak more at length about it, lest I may be laughed at, but it would be hypocrisy not to confess that I was sad on account of it for many days.

In going away, I said "adieu" to two of the thieves, my neighbors, who were at the window. The chief was not there, but when informed by his companions, he ran up and replied to my salutation. Then he commenced humming the air, "*Chi rende alla meschina.*" Did he wish to ridicule me? I would lay a wager, that if this question were put to fifty persons, forty-nine would answer "yes." Well, in spite of so great a majority, I incline to believe that this good thief wished to do me an act of politeness. I received it as such, and testified my gratitude to him by a

Digitized by Google

last look: and he, thrusting his arm between the bars, with his cap in his hand, again made me a sign when I was turning to descend the stairs.

When I was in the court-yard, I found a consolation. My little mute friend was under the portico. He saw and recognized me, and was running to meet me, when the jailer's wife, I know not why, seized him by the collar and shoved him into the house. I was pained not to be able to embrace him, but the little jumps that he made to meet me, gave me delicious emotions. It is so sweet to be loved!

That was a day of great adventures. Two steps further I found myself near the window of my former room, which Gioja now occupied. "Good morning, Melchiore," said I to him, in passing. He raised his head, and starting towards me, exclaimed, "Good morning, Silvio!"

Alas! I was not permitted to stop a moment. I turned under the doorway, ascended some steps, and found myself in a neat little chamber above that of Gioja.

After my bed had been brought, and the *secondini* had left me alone, my first care was to make a survey of the walls. There were written several memorials, some with a pencil or coal, others with a sharp pointed instrument. I found two elegant stanzas in French, which I now regret not having learned by heart. They were signed "*Le Duc de Normandie.*" I tried to sing them, adapting to them, as well as I was able, the air of my poor Magdalen. But behold, another voice from the adjoining room commenced singing them to a different air. When the singer had finished, I cried, "Bravo!" He saluted me politely, and asked if I was a Frenchman.

"No; I am an Italian, and my name is Silvio Pellico."

"The author of 'Francesca da Rimini?'"

"Precisely."

Here he paid me a delicate compliment, and offered the natural condolences on learning that I was in prison.

He inquired in what part of Italy I was born.

"In Piedmont," I replied; "I am from Saluces."

He again made me a gracious compliment upon the character and genius of the Piedmontese, mentioning particularly the men of merit born at Saluces, especially Bodoni. These praises were refined and delicate, evidently denoting the speaker to be a man of good education.

"Permit me now, sir," said I, "to ask who you are?"

"You just now sung one of my songs."

"Are the two beautiful stanzas yours, that are written upon the wall?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are, then"——

"The unfortunate Duke of Normandy."

CHAPTER XIX.

The jailer passed under our window, and made us keep silence. "What unfortunate Duke of Normandy?" said I to myself. "Is not that the title given to the son of Louis XVI.? But that poor child is dead: there is no doubt of it. Well, my neighbor must be one of those unhappy men who have tried to bring him to life. Many persons have already claimed to be Louis XVII., and been discovered to be impostors: what greater credit does he expect to obtain?"

Although I endeavored to remain in doubt, an irresistible incredulity prevailed in my mind, and still continues to do so. I determined, however, not to mortify the unhappy man, whatever fable he might relate to me.

A few minutes after, he began to sing again, and we afterwards resumed the conversation.

To my question in relation to his real rank, he replied, that he was, indeed, Louis XVII., and proceeded to declaim violently against his uncle, Louis XVIII., the usurper of his rights.

"But how is it that you did not assert these rights at the time of the Restoration?"

"I was at that time dangerously sick at Bologna. Scarcely recovered, I flew to Paris, and presented myself to the Allied Powers; but what was done was done: my uncle un-

Digitized by Google

justly refused to recognize me, and my sister joined with him to crush me. The good Prince of Condé alone received me with open arms, but his friendship availed me nothing. One evening, in the streets of Paris, I was assailed by assassins, armed with poniards, and escaped from their blows with much difficulty. After having wandered some time in Normandy, I returned to Italy and stopped at Modena. From that place I wrote without cessation to all the monarchs of Europe, and particularly to the Emperor Alexander, who always replied to me with the greatest politeness. I did not despair of obtaining justice at length, or at least a decent pension, if state policy demanded the sacrifice of my rights to the throne of France. I was arrested, conducted to the confines of the duchy of Modena, and delivered to the Austrian government. It is now eight months that I have been buried in this place, and God knows when I shall go out of it."

I did not give credit to all his words; but that he was buried in prison was but too true; and this alone inspired me with a lively compassion for him.

I begged him to relate to me briefly the story of his life. He narrated minutely all the particulars which I knew already concerning Louis XVII.: how he had been shut up with the villain, Simon the cobbler; how he had been forced to testify to an infamous slander against the habits of the poor Queen his mother, &c.; and finally, how some people came to his prison to take him, and after having substituted a stupid child named Mathurin in his place, they carried him off. There was in the street a carriage with four horses, of which one was a machine of wood, in which they concealed him. They arrived with good fortune at the banks of the Rhine; and when they had passed the frontier, General ——— (he told me his name, but I do not recollect it), the General who had liberated him served him for some time in the capacity of tutor and father, and afterwards sent or conducted him to America. There the young king, without a kingdom, experienced many vicissitudes, suffered hunger in the wilderness, engaged in war, lived honorably and happily at the court of the king of Brazil; was afterwards calumniated, persecuted, and obliged to fly. Having returned to Europe towards the close of the reign of Napoleon, he was detained a prisoner at Naples by Joachim Murat; and when he saw himself free and in a position to reclaim the throne of France, he was attacked at Bologna with that unlucky malady, during which Louis XVIII. was crowned.

CHAPTER XX.

He related this story with a surprising air of truth. I could not believe it, and yet I admired it. All the events of the French Revolution were perfectly well known to him. He spoke of them with much natural eloquence, and told, apropos to each, several curious anecdotes. There was something rather soldierlike in his language, yet there was no lack of that elegance which intercourse with good society confers.

"Will you permit me," said I, "to treat you familiarly, and without giving you your title?"

"That is what I desire," he replied. "Misfortune has at least been so far profitable to me, that I can smile at all vanities. I assure you that I esteem myself much more as a man than as a king."

Morning and evening we conversed a long time together; and although I was persuaded that he was acting a farce, his heart appeared to be good, candid, and fond of whatever is excellent. Many times I was on the point of saying to him: "Pardon me, I should like to believe that you are Louis XVII., but I confess to you, sincerely, that I am ruled by a contrary conviction; have the candor to abandon this fiction." And I meditated a beautiful little sermon for him upon the vanity of all lies, even those which appeared inoffensive.

I deferred it from day to day, waiting until our intimacy should still further increase, and never had the courage to execute my design. When I reflected upon this want of courage, I often attempted to excuse it on the ground

Digitized by Google

of politeness, an honest fear of giving pain—what do I know? But these excuses did not satisfy me; and I cannot disguise it from myself, that I should feel much better satisfied with my own conduct if this sermon which I prepared had not stuck in my throat. It is cowardice to feign to give credit to an imposture. It appears to me that I would never do it again. Yes, cowardice! Surely, no matter how delicately the meaning is enveloped, it is a bitter thing to say to a man, "I do not believe you." He will be angry; we shall lose the pleasure of his friendship; perhaps he may even overwhelm us with abuse. But all loss is more honorable than falsehood; and perhaps, also, the unhappy man who shall have loaded us with abuse, seeing that his imposture is not believed, will in secret admire our sincerity, and finish by yielding himself to those reflections which will bring him back to a better course.

The *secondini* seemed inclined to believe that their prisoner was, in fact, Louis XVII.; they had already seen so many mutations of fortune, that they did not despair of seeing him one day mount the throne of France, and then remember their devoted services. With the exception of lending their aid to his escape, they lavished upon him all the attentions which he could desire.

I was indebted to this circumstance for the honor of seeing this grand personage. He was of middle stature, forty or forty-five years of age, rather inclined to corpulence, with a truly Bourbon physiognomy. It was probably this accidental resemblance to the Bourbons which had suggested to him the idea of playing this sad character.

CHAPTER XXI.

I MUST accuse myself of another unworthy sacrifice to human respect. My neighbor was not an atheist, and even spoke sometimes of his religious feelings, like a man who appreciates and is not a stranger to them; but he entertained many unreasonable objections against Christianity, which he regarded less in its true essence than in its abuses. The superficial philosophy which had preceded and followed the Revolution in France, had dazzled him. He thought that we might worship God with more purity than according to the religion of the Gospel. Without possessing any great knowledge of Condillac and Tracy, he revered them as profound thinkers, and imagined that the latter had succeeded in resolving all the possible questions of metaphysics.

I, who had pushed my philosophical studies further, who perceived the weakness of experimental doctrine, who knew into what gross errors of criticism the age of Voltaire had fallen, in its eagerness to defame Christianity—I, who had read Guénée and other writers who have boldly unmasked this false criticism—I, who was persuaded that in strict logic we cannot admit a God and reject the Gospel—I, who considered it so vulgar a thing to follow the current of anti-Christian opinions, and not know how to rise to acknowledge how simple and sublime is Christianity when viewed in a proper light—alas! I was coward enough to sacrifice to human respect. The jests of my neighbor confounded me, although convinced of their futility. I dissembled my belief, hesitated, and reflected if it were proper or not to contradict him; I said to myself that it was useless, and wished to persuade myself that I was justifiable.

Cowardice! cowardice! Of what consequence is the bold vigor of received opinions, unless they rest upon some foundation? It is true that an unseasonable zeal is indiscreet, and may still more irritate the unbeliever. But to confess with frankness, and at the same time with modesty, what a man firmly believes to be an important truth; to confess it even when it is presumable that the avowal will not be received with approbation, but disdain, is an imperative duty. And this noble confession can always be made without taking at an improper time the tone of a missionary.

It is a duty to confess an important truth at all times; for if there is not reason to expect that it will be recognized immediately, it can nevertheless so prepare the minds of others,

Digitized by Google

that it will one day produce a greater impartiality of judgment, and the consequent triumph of the light.

CHAPTER XXII.

I REMAINED in that room a month and several days. On the night of the 18th of February, 1821, I was awakened by the rattling of chains and keys; I saw many men entering my room with a lantern: the first idea that struck me was, that they had come to murder me. But whilst I was regarding these figures with anxiety, Count B**** politely advanced towards me, and desired me to dress myself immediately, in order to depart.

This announcement surprised me, and I had the folly to hope I was to be conducted to the frontiers of Piedmont. Can it be possible that so great a tempest has so soon passed away? Shall I once more regain sweet liberty? again see my beloved parents, and brothers, and sisters?

These delusive thoughts agitated me for some minutes. I dressed in great haste, and followed my conductors, without having time to bid adieu to my neighbor. It seemed to me that I heard his voice, and it grieved me not to be able to reply to him.

"Where are you going?" said I to the Count, while entering the carriage with him and an officer of the guard.

"I cannot tell you till we are a mile from Milan."

I saw that the carriage was not going in the direction of the Vercellini gate, and all my hopes vanished!

I remained silent. It was a most beautiful night, the moon shining in full splendor. I surveyed those dear streets where I had walked so many years, so happy then! The houses, the churches, all recalled to me a thousand pleasing associations.

O thou walk of the Oriental gate, and ye public gardens, where I have wandered so many times with Foscolo, Monti, Lodovico di Brême, Pietro Borsieri, Porro and his two sons, and with so many other dear friends, conversing in all the plenitude of life and hope! As I said to myself that I was beholding you for the last time, as I saw you rapidly disappearing from my sight, O how I felt that I had loved you, and loved you still! When we had passed the gate, I pulled my hat over my eyes and wept unperceived.

I allowed more than a mile to pass, and then said to Count B****, "I suppose we are going to Verona?"

"Further," he replied; "we are going to Venice, where I am to put you into the hands of a special commission."

We travelled by post, without stopping, and on the 20th of February, arrived at Venice.

In September of the preceding year, one month before my arrest, I was at Venice, and dined with a numerous and joyous company at the hotel *della Luna*. Strange! it was to the same hotel that the Count and guard conducted me.

A servant started in recognizing me, and perceiving that I was in the hands of the officers of justice (although the guard and his two assistants were disguised so as to look like my servants). I rejoiced at this rencounter, persuaded that the servant would tell more than one person of my arrival.

We dined, and afterwards I was conducted to the palace of the Doge, where the tribunal was then in session. I passed under those dear porticoes of the Procurati, and before the Florian coffee-house, where I had enjoyed so many pleasant evenings the autumn before; I had not the fortune to meet with any one of my acquaintance.

We crossed the Piazzetta—the same Piazzetta where, last September, a mendicant had addressed me with these singular words: "It is easy to see that you are a stranger, sir; but I do not conceive why you and all strangers admire this place; for me it is a place of misfortune, and I never pass it except from necessity."

"Perhaps some misfortune has happened to you here?"

"Yes, sir, a horrible misfortune; and not

Digitized by Google

to me only! God preserve you from it!" and he left me in great haste.

As I now again passed over the same place, it was impossible not to remember the words of the mendicant. It was again on that same Piazzetta, that in the following year I mounted the scaffold to hear my sentence of death read; and the commutation of that sentence to fifteen years of *carceri duro!* (close confinement).

If my head were ever so little troubled with superstitious notions, I should attach much importance to that mendicant, who so earnestly assured me that it was an *unlucky place.* But I notice the fact only as a strange coincidence.

We ascended to the palace; Count B**** spoke to the judges, and consigned me to the hands of the jailer; and in taking leave of me, he embraced me with emotion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I FOLLOWED the jailer in silence. After having traversed many corridors and rooms, we reached a little staircase which conducted us under *the Leads*, a famous state prison since the time of the republic of Venice.

The jailer registered my name, and shut me up in the chamber assigned to me.

What is called *the Leads*, is the upper part of the old palace of the Doge, entirely covered with lead.

My room had one large window, with an enormous grate, and looked upon the roof of St. Mark's church, also covered with lead. Beyond the church, I saw in the distance the end of the Piazzetta, and a great number of cupolas and steeples on all sides. The gigantic steeple of St. Mark was distant from me only the length of the church, and I heard those who were upon the top speak quite plainly. On the left side of the church could also be seen a part of the great court of the palace, and one of the entrances. In that part of the court is a public well, whence people were constantly coming to draw water; but my room was so high, that men appeared to me no larger than children, and I could distinguish their words only when they screamed. Thus I was much more solitary than in the prisons of Milan.

During the first days, the cause of the criminal prosecution, which was brought against me by the special commission, made me rather sad, and to this was added, perhaps, the painful feeling of a greater solitude. I was, besides, further removed from my family, and no longer received any news of them. The new faces that I saw were not unfriendly to me, but they kept a seriousness almost alarming. Report had exaggerated to them the conspiracies of the Milanese, and of the rest of Italy, for independence, and they doubted not that I was one the least pardonable among the instigators of that mad plot. My little literary celebrity was known to the jailer, his wife, his daughter, his two sons, and even the two *secondini.* Who knows if they did not all regard a writer of tragedies as a kind of sorcerer?

They were serious, cautious, eager to know all that concerned me, but full of politeness.

After a few days, their manners were softened, and I found them kind. The wife was the one who most preserved the character and tone of a jailer. She was a woman of about forty years, exceedingly dry both in face and words, and appearing incapable of kindness for anything except her children.

She used to bring me coffee in the morning and after dinner; also, water, linen, &c. She was generally accompanied by her daughter, a girl of fifteen, not pretty, but of a compassionate expression, and by her two sons, one of thirteen years and the other one of ten. They retired with their mother; and these three young faces were gently turned back to look at me, while closing the door. The jailer made his appearance only when he had to conduct me to the room where the commission was assembled to examine me. The *secondini* came rarely, because they had to attend to the prisons of the police, situated a story below me, containing always many thieves. One of these *secondini* was an old man of more than seventy years, still adequate

Digitized by Google

to this fatiguing life of constantly running up and down the stairs of the various prisons; the other was a young man of twenty-four or five years, more ready to narrate his love affairs than to perform his duty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ah, yes! the cares of a criminal prosecution are horrible to a man charged with a state offence. What fear of injuring others! What difficulty to struggle against so many accusations, against so many suspicions! What apprehensions lest everything should become involved, every day, more unluckily, if the trial is not soon terminated, if new arrests are made, if new indiscretions are discovered, not only of unknown persons, but of the party itself!

Having resolved not to speak of politics, I must necessarily suppress everything relating to my trial. I will only say that, often after passing long hours at the examination, I returned to my room so much exasperated and so furious, that I should have put an end to my own life, if the voice of religion and the remembrance of my dear parents had not restrained me.

The habit of calmness, which I seemed to have acquired at Milan, had forsaken me; for many days I despaired of regaining it: they were for me days of hell. Then I ceased to pray; I doubted the justice of God; I cursed mankind and the whole universe, and revolved in my mind all possible sophisms on the vanity of virtue.

The unhappy and infuriated man is fearfully ingenious in calumniating his fellow-beings, and even the Creator himself. Anger is more immoral and more criminal than it is generally thought. He cannot rave from morning to night, for weeks; the soul most swayed by fury has of necessity its intervals of repose; and those intervals are commonly affected by the immorality that has preceded them. Then he will seem to enjoy peace; but it is a malignant and impious peace; a savage smile, without charity, without dignity; a love of disorder, of intoxication, and of scorn.

In such a state, I sung entire hours, with a sort of levity totally void of good feelings; I joked with all who came into my chamber; I forced myself to regard everything with a vulgar wisdom, the wisdom of the cynic.

This infamous time was of short duration—six or seven days.

My Bible was covered with dust. One of the sons of the jailer, while caressing me one day, said: "Since the gentleman stopped reading this bad book, he is not so melancholy, it seems to me."

"It seems to you?" said I.

And taking the Bible, I brushed off the dust with my handkerchief, and opening it at random, my eyes fell upon these words: "Then said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

I was struck at finding these words, and blushed that the boy had perceived that I no longer read the Bible, by the dust which was upon it, and that he could think I had become more amiable in neglecting God.

"Little rogue!" said I to him with a caressing reproach, and sorry to have scandalized him, "this is not a bad book, and for several days that I have not read it I have been much worse. When your mother allows you to remain a moment with me, I try to drive away my bad humor; but if you knew how it overcomes me when I am alone, when you hear me sing like a madman!"——

CHAPTER XXV.

The boy was gone—and I experienced a real joy that I had taken again my Bible in hand, and had confessed that I was worse without it. It seemed to me that I had made

Digitized by Google

reparation to a generous friend unjustly offended, and had been reconciled to him.

"And had I abandoned thee, O my God?" I cried, "and was I prevented? Could I believe that the infamous laugh of cynicism was suited to my desperate situation?"

I uttered these words with inexpressible emotion; I placed the Bible on a chair, and knelt down to read it; and I, who wept with so much difficulty, burst into tears.

These tears were a thousand times more sweet than that brutal joy. I began anew to know God; I loved him; I repented of having outraged him in degrading myself, and promised to separate from him no more; no, never!

Oh! how a sincere return to religion comforts and elevates the soul!

I read and wept more than an hour; and rose up, full of confidence that God was with me, that he had pardoned all my folly. Then my misfortunes, the torments of my trial, the impending gibbet, appeared things of little importance. I rejoiced to suffer, because in suffering with resignation I obeyed the Lord.

Thanks to Heaven, I knew how to read the Bible. The time was past when I judged it with the narrow criticism of Voltaire, deriding expressions that are neither ridiculous nor false, except when, through real ignorance or malice, they are not properly understood. I saw clearly how much it is entitled to be received as the code of holiness, and, consequently, of truth; how anti-philosophical is that fastidiousness which takes offence at certain imperfections of style, resembling the senseless pride of him who despises everything that has not an elegant form; how absurd it is to imagine that such a collection of books, religiously venerated, had not an authentic origin; how undeniable was the superiority of the Scriptures to the Koran and the theology of India.

Many have abused them; many have wished to make of them a code of injustice, a sanction of their wicked passions. This is true, but still the same reproach. Everything may be abused; and when has the abuse of a good thing authorized us to say that it is bad in itself?

Jesus Christ has declared, that all the law and the prophets, all this collection of sacred books, may be reduced to the precept of loving God and men. Must not such writings be the truth, adapted to all ages? Must they not be the ever-living Word of the Holy Spirit?

These reflections being once awakened in me, I resumed my resolution of referring to religion all my thoughts upon human affairs, all my thoughts upon the progress of civilisation, my philanthropy, my love of country—in fine, all the affections of my soul.

The few days I had passed in cynicism had strangely corrupted me. I felt the effects of it a long time, and had to struggle hard to overcome it. Every time that man yields, even for a moment, to the temptation of degrading his intellect to regard the works of God through the infernal lens of ridicule, to cease the beneficial exercise of prayer, the havoc which is made in his reason disposes him to an easy fall. Almost every day, for several weeks, I was violently assailed by thoughts of unbelief, and I employed all my strength of mind to banish them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

When these conflicts had ceased, and I seemed to be newly strengthened in the habit of glorifying God in all my desires, I tasted for some time a delicious peace. The examinations to which the commission subjected me, every two or three days, however painful they were, no longer plunged me into lasting disquietude. I took care, in my critical position, not to fail in my duties of honor and friendship, and then said, "Let God do the rest."

I returned to the strict habit of anticipating daily all surprise, all emotion, every supposable misfortune; and again this exercise became interesting to me.

My solicitude was still further increased. The two sons of the jailer, who at first sometimes kept me company, were sent to school;

Digitized by Google

and afterwards, remaining little at home, they no longer came to see me. The mother and sister, who often stopped to talk with me when the boys were there, now only came to bring my coffee, and left me directly. For the mother I felt little regret, because she did not manifest a compassionate heart. But the daughter, although not handsome, had a certain sweetness of look and language, which was not without value for me. When she brought my coffee, and said, "I made it," I always found it excellent; when she said, "Mamma made it," it was warm water.

Seeing human beings so rarely, I turned my attention to some ants that came upon my window: I fed them sumptuously; they went to seek for an army of their companions, and my window was soon filled with these little animals. I busied myself also with a beautiful spider which spun her web on one of the walls of my prison. I fed her with gnats and midges, and she took such a liking to me that she came upon my bed, into my hands, and took her prey from my fingers.

Would to God that these had been the only insects to visit me! It was yet spring, and already the midges had multiplied, I can truly say, in a frightful manner. The winter had been one of extraordinary mildness, and after some March winds, the warm weather came. It is impossible to say how hot the air became in the cell which I occupied. Situated exactly to the south, under a roof of lead, my window looking upon that of St. Mark's church, also of lead, from which the reflection was dreadful, it was suffocating. I never had an idea of heat so overpowering. To this great torment was added such a multitude of midges, that however much I moved about and destroyed them, I was entirely covered with them: the bed, the table, the floor, the chairs, the walls, the ceiling, everything, was covered with them; and the air contained an infinite number, perpetually going and coming through the window, with an infernal buzzing. The bites of these insects are painful; and to feel them from morning to night, and from night to morning, and to have to be contriving incessantly how to diminish their number, is in truth too great a suffering for mind and body.

When I had learned from experience the severity of this scourge, and could not obtain a change of my prison, I was pursued with the temptation to commit suicide, and sometimes feared that I should become crazy. But, thanks to Heaven, this fury was not of long duration, and religion continued to sustain me. It persuaded me that man ought to suffer, and suffer with fortitude; it made me feel a certain pleasure in my sufferings, the satisfaction of not yielding, but rather of overcoming everything.

I said to myself: "The more painful life becomes to me, the less terrified I shall be, if, young as I am, I shall be condemned to punishment; without these preparatory sufferings, I should perhaps die like a coward. And besides, have I such virtues as deserve happiness? and where are they?"

And after a rigorous self-examination, I found in my past life but few actions worthy of any praise; all the rest were foolish passions, idolatry, a proud and false virtue. "Well!" concluded I, "suffer then, unworthy man! If men and insects should destroy you, merely through anger, and without right, recognize them as the instruments of Divine Justice, and be still."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Has man any need of making an effort to humble himself sincerely, and to own himself a sinner? Is it not true that in general we waste our youth in vanity, and that instead of employing all our powers to advance in the career of excellence, we make use of them for the most part to degrade ourselves? There are some exceptions; but I confess that these do not regard my poor self. I have no merit in being dissatisfied with myself. When we see a lamp emitting more smoke than flame, it is no great proof of sincerity to say that it does not burn as it ought.

Without self-abasement, without the scruples of the bigot, contemplating myself with the utmost calmness of mind, I found myself

Digitized by Google

worthy of the chastisements of God. A voice from within told me, "These chastisements are due for this, if not for that; let them bring you back to Him who is perfection itself, whom mortals are called upon to imitate according to the limits of their strength."

With what reason, then, since I was forced to acknowledge myself guilty of a thousand infidelities towards God, could I complain if some men appeared vile, and others unjust? If the good things of this world were ravished from me? If I was to pine away in prison, or perish by a violent death?

I endeavored to impress deeply on my heart these reflections, so just and so much felt; and that done, I saw that it was necessary to be consistent, and that I could be so, only in blessing the just decrees of God, in loving them, and in extinguishing within me every wish contrary to them.

To strengthen myself more in this purpose, I resolved from that time forth to make a development in writing of all my thoughts and feelings. The difficulty was, that the commission, while allowing me ink and paper, counted the sheets, forbidding me to destroy any, and reserving to themselves the right of examining what use I made of them. To supply the want of paper, I had recourse to the innocent artifice of smoothing a rough table that I had, with a piece of glass, and on this I wrote each day long meditations on the duties of men, my own in particular.

I do not exaggerate when I say that the hours thus employed were sometimes delicious, in spite of the difficulty of breathing that I suffered from excessive heat, and the painful bites of the midges. To guard against these last, I was obliged, notwithstanding the heat, to cover my head and legs, and to write not only with gloves on, but with my wrists tied round, to prevent their crawling into my sleeves.

These meditations of mine took a somewhat biographical form. I wrote the history of all the good and evil developed within me since my infancy, discussing with myself, laboring to solve all my doubts, arranging, as well as I was able, all my knowledge, and all my ideas upon everything.

When all the disposable surface of the table was covered with writing, I read it over again and again, I meditated on my own meditations, and at last decided (often with regret) to erase the whole with glass, in order to have a surface again suitable to receive my thoughts.

In this manner I continued my history, often retarded by digressions of all sorts, by the analysis of this or that point of metaphysics, of morals, of politics, or religion; and when all was covered, I began to read and read again, and afterwards to efface.

Wishing to avoid anything that could prevent my giving a free and faithful account of all the facts which I recollected, as well as of my opinions, and foreseeing the possibility of some inquisitorial visit, I wrote in a sort of jargon, that is, with transpositions of letters, and abbreviations, to which I was well accustomed.

No visit of the sort happened, however, and nobody suspected that I spent that most gloomy season so agreeably. When I heard the jailer or other person open the door, I covered the table with a table-cloth and placed upon it the inkstand and the *legal* sheets of paper.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Some of my hours were also devoted to this paper, sometimes a whole day or night. It served me for literary compositions. During that time I composed the "*Esther d'Engaddi*," "*Iginia d'Asti*," and the four songs entitled "*Tancreda*," "*Rosilde*," "*Eligi and Valafrido*," and "*Adello*," besides many outlines of tragedies and other productions, such as a poem upon the League of Lombardy, and another on Christopher Columbus.

As the renewal of my paper, when it was exhausted, was not always a thing easily

Digitized by Google

and readily obtained, I made the first sketch of every composition on the table, or on brown paper, in which were wrapped the dried figs and other fruits which I sent for. Sometimes, giving my dinner to one of the *secondini*, and making him believe that I had no appetite, I induced him to make me a present of some sheets of paper. This happened only in certain cases, when the table was covered with writing, and I could not yet resolve to erase it. Then I suffered from hunger, and although my money was deposited with the jailer, I asked of him nothing to eat the whole day, partly that he might not suspect that I had given away my dinner, partly that the *secondino* might not perceive that I had told him a falsehood in assuring him that I had no appetite. To sustain myself, I took at night very strong coffee, and begged that it should be made by *Sora Zanze*. This was the daughter of the jailer, who, when she could do it without the knowledge of her mother, made it uncommonly strong; so much so, that on account of my empty stomach, it caused a kind of nervous excitement without pain, which kept me awake the whole night.

In this state of pleasing intoxication, I felt my intellectual powers redoubled; I philosophised, composed poetry and prayed until day-break, with surprising enjoyment. Then I was seized by a sudden weakness; I threw myself on my bed, and in spite of the insects which still succeeded in sucking my blood, although I was well wrapped up, I slept for an hour or two profoundly.

Those nights, agitated by strong coffee taken upon an empty stomach, and passed in such pleasing elevation of mind, appeared too delightful to me not to seek to procure them often. Thus, even when I had no need of the *secondino's* paper, I often adopted the plan of not touching a mouthful of my dinner for the purpose of obtaining at night the desired charm of the magic beverage. Happy when I attained my object! More than once it happened that the coffee was not made by the compassionate Zanze; it was then but an insipid drink. This disappointment put me rather into ill humor. Instead of being excited, I felt languid and hungry; I gaped, and threw myself on my bed, and could not sleep.

I afterwards complained to Zanze, and she pitied me. One day when I was scolding her bitterly, as if she had cheated me, the poor child began to cry, and said to me, "Sir, I never deceived any one, and yet everybody accuses me of deceit."

"Everybody? It appears that I am not the only one who gets provoked by such drink."

"That is not what I mean. Ah! if you knew—if I could pour out my poor heart to yours!"

"But do not weep so. What can be the matter? I beg your pardon if I have scolded you wrongfully. I fully believe that it is not your fault that I had such wretched coffee."

"Ah! sir, I am not crying for that."

My self-love was a little mortified at that, but I smiled.

"You weep, then, when I scold you, but for quite another thing?"

"Frankly, yes."

"Who, then, has called you deceitful?"

"A lover."

And her face became covered with blushes. In her ingenuous confidence she narrated to me a serio-comic tale which affected me.

CHAPTER XXIX.

After that day I became, I know not why, the confidant of this young girl, who began to hold long conversations with me.

She said to me sometimes, "You are so good, sir, that I regard you as a daughter might regard her father."

"You make me a poor compliment," I replied, repelling her hand; "I am scarcely thirty-two years old, and you already treat me as your father!"

"Well, sir, I will say as a brother."

And she took my hand by force, and pressed it affectionately; and all this was very innocent.

Digitized by Google

I said to myself afterwards, "It is lucky that she is not a beauty! otherwise these innocent familiarities might disconcert me."

Sometimes also I said, "It is fortunate she is so young! There will be no danger of my falling in love with a girl of her age."

At other times I felt a little inquietude in observing that I had deceived myself in thinking her ugly, and was obliged to admit that her features and form were not without regularity.

"If she were not so pale," said I, "and had not those few freckles on her face, she might pass for handsome."

The truth is, it is impossible not to find some charm in the presence, the look and the language of a young, lively and affectionate girl. I had done nothing to captivate her affections, and yet she loved me *as a father*, or if I preferred, *as a brother*. Why? Because she had read my "*Francesca da Rimini*," and "*Eufemio*," and my verses made her weep so much! because, too, I was a prisoner, *without having been guilty*, she said, either of *robbery* or *murder*.

In fine, how could I, who had become attached to Magdalen without having seen her, remain indifferent to the sisterly attentions, graceful flatteries, and the excellent coffee of the Venezianina adolescente sbirra?

I should not speak the truth if I attributed to my wisdom my not falling in love with her. I was not taken with her, simply because she had a lover already, of whom she was passionately fond. Alas for me if it had been otherwise!

But if the feeling which she awoke in my heart was not exactly what is called love, I acknowledge that it approached somewhat to it. It was my desire that she should be happy, that she should marry the man she loved; I had not the least jealousy, the remotest idea that she could make me the object of her love, but when I heard my door open, my heart beat with the hope that it was Zanze; if it was not, I was dissatisfied; if it was she, my heart bounded with joy.

Her parents, who had already conceived a good opinion of me, and who knew that she was desperately in love with another, had no scruples in letting her come to bring my coffee almost always in the morning, and sometimes in the evening.

She had a bewitching simplicity and kindheartedness. She said to me: "I am so in love with another, and yet I so gladly stay with you! When I do not see my lover I have a feeling of ennui everywhere except here."

"And do you not know why?"

"No, indeed."

"Then I will tell you; it is because I let you talk about your lover."

"That is very true; but another reason is, I have so much esteem for you."

Poor girl! she had the charming fault of always taking my hand and pressing it, and did not perceive that it at the same time pleased and troubled me.

Thanks to Heaven that I am able to recollect this excellent creature without the least remorse!

CHAPTER XXX.

These pages would certainly be more interesting if Zanze had fallen in love with me, or if, at least, I had been taken with her. And yet the bond of pure esteem that united us, was dearer to me than love. And if I feared for a moment in the folly of my heart, that this feeling might become changed in its character, I was seriously saddened by it.

Once in doubt that this might happen, wretched at finding her (I know not by what enchantment) a hundred times prettier than she appeared at first, surprised at the melancholy which I often felt in her absence, and at the joy which her presence again brought me, I acted the sullen for two days, imagining that she would drop somewhat of her familiarity towards me. The expedient availed little; the girl was so patient, so full of compassion! She rested her elbow upon

Digitized by Google

the window, and stood regarding me in silence. After some time she said:

"You appear tired of my company; yet if I could, I would remain here all day, simply because I see that you need some amusement. This ill humor is the natural effect of solitude. But try to talk a little, and the ill humor will pass off. If you do not wish to chat, I will do it myself."

"Of your lover, eh?"

"Oh, no! not always about him: I know how to speak of other things, too."

And she commenced, in fact, to entertain me with the little interests of her family, the harshness of her mother, the kindness of her father, and the wild pranks of her brothers. These recitals were full of simplicity and grace. But without being aware of it, she always fell back upon the beloved theme—her unhappy love.

I did not wish to leave off my sullenness, and hoped that she would be offended at it; but either through inattention or art, she did not seem to observe it, and at last I was forced to resume my serenity, to smile, to be affected, and to thank her for her sweet patience with me.

I abandoned the ungrateful thought of wishing to offend her, and gradually my fears subsided. Certainly I was not in love with her. I examined my scruples for a long time; I wrote my reflections on the subject, and the exposition of them did me good.

Man sometimes frightens himself at scarecrows; not to be afraid of them, it is necessary to examine them nearer and with more attention.

And what harm was there, if I desired her visits with tender anxiety—if I appreciated their sweetness—if I rejoiced in her sympathy—if I returned pity for pity, since our thoughts of each other had the purity of the purest thoughts of childhood—since her pressures of the hand and her looks, full of affection, while they troubled, filled me with a salutary respect?

One evening, while pouring into my heart a great affliction that she had experienced, the unhappy girl threw her arms around my neck and covered my face with tears. There was not the least profane idea in this embrace. A daughter could not embrace her father with more respect.

The only effect of it was, that my imagination was too vividly impressed by it. This embrace often recurred to my mind, and then I could think of nothing else.

Another time, when she abandoned herself to a similar burst of filial confidence, I hastily disengaged myself from her dear arms, without returning her embrace, and said to her, stammering:

"I beg of you, Zanze, do not embrace me so any more, it is not right."

She fixed her eyes upon my face, cast them down, and blushed; certainly it was the first time that she read in my soul that I could have any weakness towards her.

Afterwards she did not cease to be familiar with me; but her familiarity became more respectful, more conformed to my wishes, and I felt grateful to her for it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

I CANNOT speak of evils which afflict other men; as to those which have fallen to my lot since my entrance into life, I must acknowledge that, in examining them closely, I have always found them ordered for my benefit; yes, even to the horrible heat that oppressed me, to those armies of gnats which waged so cruel a war! A thousand times have I reflected upon it; without this inexhaustible source of torments, should I have found the constant vigilance necessary to keep me invulnerable to the darts of a love which threatened me, and which I should have with difficulty restrained within the bounds of respect, with a character so playful and affectionate as was that of this young girl? If, sometimes, even then, I so much distrusted myself, should I have been able to govern my foolish imagination, in an atmosphere a little more agreeable, and a little more suited to enjoyment?

Digitized by Google

With the imprudence of the parents of Zanze, who had so great a confidence in me; with the imprudence of the girl herself, who did not foresee that she could be to me the cause of a guilty intoxication; with the insecurity of my virtue, doubtless the suffocating heat of that furnace, and the cruel bites of the gnats, were a salutary thing for me.

This thought somewhat reconciled me with those scourges, and then I asked myself: "Would you be freed from them, and go into a good room cooled by a pure air, on the condition of seeing this affectionate creature no more?"

Must I tell the truth? I had not the courage to answer that question.

When we wish well to another, we find an indefinable pleasure in things the most insignificant in appearance. Often a word from Zanze, a smile, a tear, a graceful turn of her Venetian dialect, the quickness of her arm in defending herself and me from the gnats with her handkerchief or fan, all this infused into my soul a childish joy, which lasted the whole day. Above all, it was sweet to me to see that her sorrows subsided while speaking to me, that my sympathy was dear to her, that my counsels persuaded her, and that her heart warmed when we spoke of virtue and of God.

"When we have spoken together of religion," she remarked to me, "I pray more willingly, and with a more lively faith."

Sometimes, cutting short a frivolous conversation, she took the Bible, opened it, and, kissing a verse at random, begged me to translate and explain it to her, then she said: "I should like that each time you read that verse, you would recollect that I have imprinted upon it a kiss."

These kisses, in truth, did not always fall happily, particularly if she happened to open the Song of Songs. Then, not to make her blush, I took advantage of her ignorance of Latin, and made use of phrases with which I could at the same time preserve her innocence and the sacredness of the book, two things that inspired me with the greatest veneration. In such cases I never allowed myself to smile. It was, nevertheless, not a small embarrassment to me, when, sometimes, not having well understood my false version, she begged me to translate the verse word for word, and did not let me pass quickly to another subject.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Nothing is lasting here below. Zanze fell sick. During the first days of her illness she came to see me, complaining of severe pains in her head. She wept, and would not tell me the cause of her tears. She only muttered some complaints against her lover. "He is a villain," she said, "but may God forgive him!"

However urgently I begged her to unburthen her heart to me, as she was accustomed to do, I could not find out what so much distressed her.

"I will come back to-morrow morning," said she, one evening.

But the next day, my coffee was brought by her mother; on other days, by the *secondini*. Zanze was seriously ill.

The *secondini* brought me equivocal reports concerning the love of the girl, which made my hair stand on end. A seduction!—But perhaps that was a calumny. I confess that I gave them credit, and was much afflicted at so great a misfortune. I like, however, to hope they were false. After more than a month of sickness, the poor thing was taken to the country, and I saw her no more.

I cannot express how much I mourned her loss. Oh! how much more horrible did my solitude become! A hundred times more bitter to me than her absence, was the thought of this good creature's unhappiness! Her sweet compassion had so often consoled me in my miseries, and now mine was unavailing for her. But, certainly, she knew that I would weep for her, that I would have made every sacrifice to procure for her, if it had been possible, some consolation; that I would never cease to bless her and to offer up prayers for her happiness.

Digitized by Google

While Zanze remained, her visits, though always too short, diversifying agreeably the monotony of my perpetual meditations and silent studies, interweaving other ideas with my own, and stirring up sweet affections within me, really embellished my adversity and doubled my existence.

After her departure, my prison again became a tomb to me. For many days I was oppressed with sadness to such a degree, that I found no pleasure even in writing.

My sadness, however, was calm in comparison to the furies that I had before experienced. Did this indicate that I had become more familiarized with misfortune, more of a philosopher, more a Christian? or only that the suffocating heat of my room had had the effect of destroying the force of my sorrow? Oh, no! I remember feeling it powerfully in the bottom of my soul, and the more powerfully, perhaps, that I would not give vent to it in cries and agitation.

Certainly, this long apprenticeship had already made me more capable of enduring new afflictions, by resigning myself to the will of God. I had said to myself so many times, "It is cowardice to complain," that I had at length learned how to restrain my complaints, ready to burst forth, and was even ashamed that they had been so near my lips.

The habit of writing my thoughts had contributed to fortify my mind, to disabuse me of vanities, and to reduce most of my reasoning to these conclusions:

"There is a God: therefore an infallible justice: then, everything that happens is ordered for the best; therefore the sufferings of man on earth are for the good of man."

My acquaintance with Zanze had been a benefit to me; she had softened my disposition. Her sweet approbation had incited me not to falsify, for several months, the duty which I considered incumbent upon every man, to be superior to fortune, and consequently patient. And these months of constancy had habituated me to resignation.

Zanze saw me fall into a passion but twice. The first was on the occasion of the bad coffee, of which I have already spoken; the second was under the following circumstances:

Every two or three weeks, the jailer brought a letter from my family. This letter, passing first through the hands of the commission, came to me horribly mutilated by erasures made by the blackest ink. It happened, one day, that instead of erasing a few phrases only, they had drawn a horrible line over the entire letter, with the exception of these words: "*My dear Silvio,*" which were at the beginning of the letter, and the closing salutation: "*We embrace you with all our hearts.*"

This threw me into such a rage, that even in the presence of Zanze I burst out into violent cries, and cursed I know not whom. The poor child commiserated my grief, but at the same time reproached me with inconsistency in respect of my principles. I saw that she was right and cursed no m[illegible]

CHAPTER XXXIII.

One of the *secondini* came into my room one day, and with an air of mystery, said to me:

"When Siora Zanze was here . . . as it was she who brought the coffee . . . and stopped a long time to talk . . . I was afraid the little rogue would discover all your secrets, sir . . . "

"She never discovered a single one," said I, in anger; "and if I had had any, I should not have been so simple as to let them be drawn out *of* me. Continue."

"Pardon, sir, I did not say that you were simple, but I did not put much confidence in Siora Zanze myself, and now that you have nobody to hold you company . . . I trust . . . that . . . "

"What? explain yourself at once."

"But first swear not to betray me."

"Oh! to swear not to betray you, I can do that; I never betrayed anybody."

"Then you swear it truly, eh?"

"Yes, I swear not to betray you. But know, dunce that you are, that a man capable of betraying you, will also be capable of violating an oath."

Digitized by Google

Then, drawing a letter from his pocket, he gave it to me, trembling and conjuring me to destroy it as soon as I had read it.

"Stop a moment," said I, opening the letter; "when I have read it, I will destroy it in your presence."

"But it will be necessary to answer it, sir, and I cannot wait. Do it at your leisure; only let us make this agreement. When you hear any one coming, mark well: if it is I, I will always hum the air, '*Sognai, mi gera un gato.*' Then you have no surprise to fear, and you can have any papers whatever in your pocket. But if you do not hear that tune, it will be a sign either that it is not I, or that I have some one with me. In such a case, take care not to have any papers concealed, for they might make a search; but if you have any, be sure to tear them up, and throw them out of the window."

"Never fear: I see that you are prudent, and I will be so too."

"And yet you called me a fool."

"You do right to reproach me with it," said I, pressing his hand. "Pardon me."

He went away, and I read:

"I am (here was the writer's name) one of your admirers. I know all your *Francesca da Rimini* by heart. I was arrested for (and here he gave the date and cause of his arrest), and I would give I know not how many pounds of my blood, to have the happiness of being with you, or at least of having a prison adjoining yours, so that we might converse together. Ever since I heard from Tremerello (so we will call our confidant) that you were arrested, and for what cause, I have burned with the desire of telling you that no one compassionates your misfortunes more than I, that no one loves you more. Will you be good enough to accept the following proposition, viz.: that we should mutually alleviate the weight of our solitude by a written correspondence? I promise you as a man of honor, that no living soul shall ever know of it from me, persuaded that if you accept it, I may expect the same secrecy from you. Meanwhile, that you may know something about me, I will give you a sketch of my life," &c.

●

Here followed the sketch.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Every reader with a moderate share of imagination, will easily comprehend the electrical effect of such a letter on a poor prisoner, especially on one of a character far from savage, and of an affectionate heart. My first feeling was to become attached to this unknown individual, to pity his misfortunes, to be grateful for the good-will that he manifested to me. Yes, I exclaimed, I accept thy proposition, generous man! Would that my letters could bring thee a consolation equal to that which thine are about to give me; to what thy first has given already!

I perused and re-perused this letter with a childish joy, and blessed a hundred times the hand that wrote it; each of his expressions seemed to reveal a pure and noble soul.

It was sunset; my hour of prayer. Oh, what perceptions I had of God! How I thanked Him for always finding some new means to prevent the powers of my mind and heart from languishing! How much the memory of all His precious gifts revived in me!

I was standing at my window with my arms passed between the bars and my hands clasped; below me was the Church of St. Mark; and a multitude of wild pigeons were caressing each other, flitting about, and making their nests upon its leaden roof. The most magnificent heavens spread out before me: I overlooked all that part of Venice which was visible from my prison; a far-off murmur of human voices struck sweetly upon my ear. In that sad but imposing place I communed with Him whose eyes alone beheld me. I commended to Him my father, my mother, and, one after the other, everybody that was dear to me; and He seemed to return me this answer: "Trust in my goodness!" and I exclaimed, "In thy goodness I put my trust!" And I finished my prayer moved and comforted, and regardless of the bites which the gnats had joyously given me in the meantime.

This evening, as my imagination began to grow calm after so great an exaltation; as the insects became insupportable, and I felt the

Digitized by Google

necessity of covering my face and hands, a vile and malicious thought came into my head and made me shudder. I tried to shake it off, but in vain.

Tremerello had hinted an infamous suspicion in respect to Zanze; that she had been there for the purpose of spying out my secrets. She! that candid soul! who knew not a word of politics, nor desired to know.

To doubt her was impossible, but I asked myself: "Am I equally certain of Tremerello? If this knave were the instrument of some villainous plot? . . . If this letter were a fabrication, by I know not whom, to induce me to make important disclosures to a new friend? . . . Perhaps this pretended prisoner who writes to me, does not even exist; . . . perhaps he exists, and is a traitor, who is trying to get possession of the secrets of another to purchase his own safety by revealing them . . . perhaps he is a man of honor; well, but then the traitor is Tremerello, who is trying to ruin both of us, to obtain an addition to his salary."

Oh! frightful thing, but too natural for one who groans in prison, to dread hatred and knavery from all quarters.

These doubts tormented and discouraged me. No, with respect to Zanze, I could never entertain them for a moment. Nevertheless, since Tremerello dropped that word in relation to her, I was tortured by half a doubt, not of her, but of those who let her come into my room. Had they from their own zeal or by the order of a superior, imposed on her the duty of a spy? Ah! if it were, how badly were they served!

But what was I to do with the letter of the unknown? Follow the severe and narrow counsels of that fear which bears the name of prudence? Give back the letter to Tremerello, and say to him, "I do not wish to risk my tranquillity?" . . . And what if there was no snare? If the unknown was a man most worthy of my friendship, most worthy that I should risk something to soften the anguish of solitude? Coward! You stand perhaps not two steps from the scaffold, the fatal sentence may be pronounced at any day, and would you refuse to do a last act of love? I must . . . I must reply! . . . But if, unhappily, this correspondence should be discovered, although no one, in conscience, can make a crime of it, will not a dreadful punishment fall, nevertheless, upon poor Tremerello? Is not this consideration sufficient to impose it upon me as a duty to decline any clandestine correspondence? . . .

CHAPTER XXXV.

I WAS agitated all the evening, and did not shut my eyes during the night; in the midst of so many uncertainties I knew not what to decide.

At day-break I leaped from my bed, sprang to the window, and prayed. In cases of difficulty, it is needful to ask the guidance of God with confidence, to listen to His inspirations, and follow them.

I did so; and after a long prayer, I descended, brushed off the gnats, passed my hands softly over my cheeks covered with bites, and my resolution was taken: to make known to Tremerello my apprehension that the correspondence might turn against him; renounce it, if he hesitated, and accept it, if this fear did not deter him.

I walked until I heard some one humming the tune, *Sognai, &c.* Tremerello was bringing my coffee.

I told him my scruples and spared nothing to arouse his fear. I found him firm in the wish to serve, as he said, *two signors so accomplished.* This was quite a contrast with his rabbit face, and the name of Tremerello, which we gave him. Well! I also remained firm.

"I will leave you my wine," said I; "furnish me the paper necessary for this correspondence, and be sure that if I hear the noise of keys without your song, I will instantly destroy every illegal article."

"Here is a sheet of paper now; I will always give you as many as you want, and trust entirely to your prudence."

Digitized by Google

I burned my mouth in swallowing my coffee too hastily. Tremerello went away, and I sat down to write.

Did I do right? and was the resolution that I had taken truly an inspiration of God? Was it not rather a triumph of my natural intrepidity, which leads me to prefer what pleases me, at painful sacrifices?—a proud complaisance, excited by the esteem that the unknown manifested for me, mingled with the fear of appearing pusillanimous, if I should prefer a prudent silence to a somewhat perilous correspondence?

How was I to resolve these doubts? I imparted them with candor to my companion in captivity, in my answer to him; adding, nevertheless, that in my opinion, when any one thinks he acts from good motives, and without manifest repugnance of conscience, he should not be afraid of committing a fault; that he should likewise reflect with all seriousness upon what we were about to undertake, and tell me frankly what reasons he had either for confidence or apprehension in coming to his determination; that if, upon second thought, he judged the attempt too rash, we ought to forego the consolation promised us by this correspondence, and content ourselves with having become known to each other by this interchange of a few words, the indelible tokens of an elevated friendship.

I wrote four pages glowing with the most sincere affection. I told him briefly the cause of my imprisonment; I spoke with an outpouring of heart, of my family, and of some other intimate friends, and I endeavored to lay open to him the very depths of my soul.

My letter was conveyed in the evening. Not having slept the preceding night, I was very much fatigued; sleep did not wait to be invoked, and the next morning, I awoke refreshed, cheerful and palpitating at the sweet thought of receiving, perhaps in a moment, the reply of my friend.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The reply came with my coffee. I threw myself on the neck of Tremerello, and said to him with tenderness: "God reward you for such an act of charity!" My suspicions in regard to him, as well as the unknown, had vanished, I can hardly tell why; because they were odious to me; because, having the prudence never to speak inconsiderately of politics, they appeared useless; because, though an admirer of the genius of Tacitus, I have, nevertheless, very little faith in the justice of those precepts of his that lead us to see everything in black.

Julian (so my correspondent signed himself), commenced his letter with a courteous preamble, declaring himself free from apprehension in relation to the projected correspondence. Then he rallied me on my hesitation, cautiously at first, yet afterwards with something of sharpness. At length, after an eloquent eulogium on frankness, he begged I would pardon him if he could not conceal from me the dissatisfaction which he had felt in observing in me *a certain scrupulous hesitation, a certain Christian refinement of conscience which could not be reconciled with sound philosophy.*

"I shall always esteem you," he added, "even if we should not agree on this point, but the sincerity I profess, obliges me to tell you that I am of no religion; that I abhor all; that I take, *from modesty*, the name of Julian, because that good emperor was the enemy of Christians, though, in reality, I go much further than he. The crowned Julian believed in a God, and had certain bigotries peculiar to himself. For my part I have none; I do not believe in God; to me, all virtue consists in truth, and those who seek for it, and in hating whatever displeases me."

And, continuing in this manner, he offered reasons for nothing; he inveighed right and left against Christianity; praised, with a pompous energy, the superiority of virtue without religion; and then, in a style half serious half jesting, he launched into a eulogy of the emperor Julian, on account of his apostacy and *his philanthropic efforts* to eradicate all traces of the Gospel from the earth.

Digitized by Google

Fearing then, lest he had too rudely attacked my opinions, he again asked my pardon, and declaimed against the so frequent want of sincerity. He repeated his extreme desire of keeping up an intercourse with me, and closed with the usual salutation. In a postscript he added: "I have no scruples but that of not being sufficiently frank. I cannot conceal from you that I suspect the Christian language which you hold to me is feigned. I hope it sincerely. In that case, throw aside the mask; I have given you the example."

I know not how to express the strange effect which this letter produced upon me. While reading the first lines, my heart palpitated like that of a lover; then a hand of ice seemed to grasp it. That sarcasm about the tenderness of my conscience offended me. I repented having entered into communication with such a man; I, who have so much contempt for cynicism, who believe it the most anti-philosophical and degrading of all tendencies; who am so little imposed on by arrogance!

When I had read the last word, I took the letter between the thumb and finger of one hand and the thumb and finger of the other, and raising the left hand, I brought the right one rapidly down, in such a manner, that each remained in possession of half the letter.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

I looked at the two pieces and meditated for a moment upon the inconstancy of human things and the falsity of their appearances. A moment ago, so ardent a desire for this letter, and now I tear it with indignation! A moment ago, so sweet a presentiment of a new friendship with this companion in misfortune, such a perfect persuasion of mutual consolation to be derived from it, such a disposition to bestow upon him my warmest affections, and now, I call him insolent!

I put the two pieces one upon the other, and placing them again as at first, between the thumb and finger of one hand and the thumb and finger of the other, I proceeded to raise the left hand and bring the right rapidly down.

I was going to repeat the same operation, when one of the four pieces fell from my hand; I stooped to pick it up, and during the short time of stooping down and rising up, I changed my purpose and conceived the desire of reading again this arrogant letter.

I sat down and fitted together the four pieces upon my bible, and read them the second time. Leaving them in that state, I walked my room, and then read them over again, making in the meanwhile these reflections:

If I make him no reply, he will believe that I am annihilated and confounded, that I dare not appear again in the presence of such a Hercules. Let us answer him, and make him see that we do not fear to confront our doctrines with his own; let us show him, in a proper manner, that it was no cowardice to mature our counsels, to hesitate when a dangerous step was in contemplation, and more dangerous for others than ourselves. Let him learn that true courage consists not in sporting with conscience; that true dignity dwells not in pride. Let us demonstrate to him the reasonableness of Christianity, and the powerless logic of incredulity. Besides, if this Julian manifests opinions so opposite to mine, if he does not spare pungent sarcasms, if he takes so little pains to captivate my affections, is it not a proof, at least, that he is not a spy? And still, could it not be a refinement of art to apply the lash rudely upon my self-love?—Yet no, I cannot believe it. I am malicious, because, feeling offended at his bold jests, I would like to persuade myself that he who launched them must be the vilest of men. Base malignity, that I have so many times condemned in others, depart from my heart! No, Julian is what he is, and nothing more; insolent, but not a spy. . . And have I indeed the right to give the name of *insolence* to what he calls *frankness*. . . Behold thy humility, O hypocrite! It is sufficient that any person, by an error of judgment, maintains false opinions and turns thy faith into ridicule; at

Digitized by Google

once thou arrogatest the right of abusing him. God knows if that fierce humility and malevolent zeal in the heart of a Christian are not worse than the bold frankness of this unbeliever! . . Perhaps he needs but a single ray of grace to turn this energetic love of truth into a piety more solid than my own. . . Had I not better pray for him than to get angry and think myself better than he? . . . Who knows if, while I was furiously tearing his letter, he was not reading over mine with a mild benevolence; if he did not reckon upon my goodness, in believing me incapable of being offended at the freedom of his language! . . . Who is the most guilty, one who loves and says: "I am not a Christian," or one who says; "I am a Christian," and does not love? . . . It is difficult to know a man well, even after living with him long years, and would I judge him from a single letter? Among so many chances, may it not be possible, that this man, without acknowledging it to himself, is not quite at peace in his atheism, and for that reason he provokes me to the combat, in the secret hope of being forced to yield? Oh! if it were so; O! great God! in whose hands the most unworthy instrument can become powerful, choose me, choose me for this work! Dictate to me such powerful and holy arguments as may convince this unfortunate man, as may lead him to bless thee, and teach him that, away from thee, there is no virtue which is not a contradiction.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I TORE into smaller fragments the four parts of the letter, but without any feeling of anger; I went to the window, extended my hand, and stayed to watch the fate of the little bits of paper thus given to the wind. Some lodged upon the leads of the church, others gyrated a long time in the air and fell to the ground. I saw them dispersed in such a manner that there was no danger that any one could re-unite them and penetrate the mystery.

I wrote afterwards to Julian, and took especial care neither to be, nor to appear, offended.

I rallied him upon his fear that I should carry my tenderness of conscience to a degree incompatible with philosophy, and begged that, in that respect at least, he would suspend his judgment. I applauded the profession of candor that he made, I assured him that he would find me equal to himself in that respect, and added, that to give him a proof of it, I appointed myself the champion of Christianity; "well persuaded," said I, "that if I am always ready to listen amicably to your opinions, you will have the liberality to hear mine in patience.

This defence, I purposed to make little by little, and in the meanwhile commenced it by a faithful analysis of the essence of Christianity:—The worship of God stripped of superstition, brotherly love between men, a constant aspiration after virtue, humility without abjectness, dignity without pride; for a model a God-man! What more philosophic and more grand?

I then designed to demonstrate how so great wisdom was more or less feebly manifested to those who, with the light of reason, sought after truth, but had never been universally diffused; how, at the coming of our Divine Master upon earth, it gave a striking testimony of itself, by means, humanly speaking, the most feeble. What the greatest philosophers could not effect—the overthrow of idolatry and the general teaching of brotherly love—a few untaught messengers accomplished. Then the emancipation of slaves became more frequent, and finally, there appeared a civilisation without slaves; a state of society which the ancient philosophers believed impossible.

A review of the history of the world since Jesus Christ, was to show how the religion founded by him was always found adapted to all possible grades of civilisation. It was false, therefore, that, civilisation continuing to advance, the Gospel would not be in harmony with it.

Digitized by Google

I wrote in very small characters, and at considerable length. I could not, however, proceed very far, because my paper failed me. I read and reviewed my introduction, and it seemed to me well done. There was not a single phrase indicative of resentment for the sarcasms of Julian, whilst expressions of good-will abounded in it; my heart, now fully brought back to toleration, had dictated them.

I sent the letter, and the following morning I awaited the response with anxiety.

Tremerello came and said:

"The gentleman was not able to write, but he prays you to continue your pleasantry."

"Pleasantry!" I exclaimed. "He could not have said *pleasantry!* you must have misunderstood him."

Tremerello shrugged up his shoulders: "I must have misunderstood him!"

"What! you really believe he said *pleasantry?*"

"As much as I believe that I hear this moment the bell of St. Mark." (It was then ringing.) I drank my coffee in silence.

"But tell me, had the gentleman read the whole of my letter?"

"I imagine so; because he laughed, laughed like a fool, and made of the letter a ball which he tossed into the air, and when I told him not to forget to destroy it, he destroyed it at once."

"Very well."

I returned my coffee-cup to Tremerello, telling him that it was plain the coffee had been made by Siora Bettina.

"Did you find it bad, sir?"

"Detestable."

"Yet I made it myself, and can assure you that I made it strong and there were no dregs in the bottom."

"I have perhaps a bad mouth."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

I WALKED and scolded the whole morning. "What sort of man is this Julian? Why call my letter a pleasantry? Why laugh and play ball with it? Why not even a single line of answer? That is the way with all infidels! Feeling the weakness of their doctrines if any one takes the trouble to confront them, they do not listen, they laugh, they affect a superiority of understanding that has no need to examine anything. The wretches! And when has there ever been a philosophy without investigation, without seriousness? If it is true that Democritus was always laughing, he was a buffoon. But I deserve it; why undertake this correspondence? That I deceived myself for a moment was excusable; but when I saw that he was becoming insolent, was I not a fool to write to him again?

I was resolved to write to him no more. At dinner, Tremerello took my wine, poured it into a flask, and putting it into his pocket, "Oh! I recollect," said he, "I have some paper here for you." And he gave it to me.

He departed, while I, fixing my eyes on the blank paper, felt the temptation to write to Julian for the last time, and take leave of him with a good lesson upon the meanness of insolence.

"Excellent temptation!" said I afterwards, "to render him scorn for scorn! to make him hate Christianity still more, by showing him that I, a Christian, am full of pride and intolerance! No, it must not be; we must cease this correspondence altogether. But if I stop so abruptly, will he not equally say that I did so from pride and intolerance? I must write to him once more, and without bitterness. But if I can write without bitterness, will it not be better to appear ignorant of his sarcasms and the name of *pleasantry* which he has bestowed on my letter? Will it not be better to continue in candor my apology of Christianity? I reflected a little, and at length fixed upon this course.

In the evening I sent my packet, and on the following morning received a few lines of thanks, extremely cold, without any biting expressions, but also without the least sign of approbation, or of invitation to continue.

This billet displeased me, nevertheless I resolved to proceed.

My thesis could not be briefly discussed; I

Digitized by Google

made it the subject of five or six long letters, to each of which he returned me a laconic answer of thanks accompanied with some declamations foreign to the question; sometimes imprecating his enemies, sometimes laughing at his own imprecations, saying that it was natural for the strong to oppress the weak, that he regretted but one thing, that he was not one of the strong; at other times he confided to me his loves, and the empire which they exercised upon his tortured imagination.

Nevertheless, at my last letter upon Christianity, he said that he was preparing a long answer. I waited more than a week, and during that time, he entertained me each day with other matters, generally obscene subjects. I begged him to recollect the answer he owed me, and recommended to him to apply his mind to weigh alternately all the reasons I had given him.

He answered me somewhat angrily, lavishing upon himself the titles of *philosopher, a man settled in his principles, a man who had no need of reflecting so much to comprehend that glow-worms are not lanterns;* and began again to speak merrily of some scandalous adventures.

CHAPTER XL.

I BORE it with patience, that I might not draw upon myself the epithets of *bigot* and *intolerant*, and because I did not despair that after this fever of erratic buffooneries, there would come a period of reflection. In the meanwhile, I did not hide from him how much I disapproved of his disrespect for women, his profane manner of treating love; and I pitied the unfortunate creatures that he said had been his victims.

He pretended to give little credit to my disapprobation, and repeated; "Though you talk about immorality, I am certain that you are amused by my recitals; all men love pleasure as well as myself, but they have not the frankness to acknowledge it openly. I will speak of it so much that I shall enchant you, and you will feel obliged, in conscience, to applaud me."

But from week to week he ceased not these infamous stories, and I, ever hoping at each letter to find a different subject, and allowing myself to be led on by curiosity, read all; and my mind, without being already corrupted, remained at least disturbed, and remote from noble and holy thoughts. The conversation of degraded men produces degradation, unless a man has virtue far above ordinary; far above mine.

"Behold yourself punished for your presumption!" said I to myself. "See what is gained by wishing to act the missionary without his sacred character!"

One day, I decided to write to him these words; "I have forced myself hitherto to call your attention to other subjects, and you always send me back stories which, I have frankly told you, were disagreeable to me. If it suits you to speak of more worthy things we will continue our correspondence; otherwise, let us shake hands and each one keep to himself."

I was two days without an answer, and at first was glad of it. "O blessed solitude!" I exclaimed, "how much less bitter art thou than a conversation discordant and degrading! Instead of torturing myself with reading indecent recitals, instead of fatiguing myself to no purpose by opposing to them the expression of sentiments which honor humanity, I will resume my conversation with God, with the dear remembrance of my family and my true friends. I will recommence the reading of the Bible more attentively, the writing of my thoughts on the table, in order to study the depths of my heart and try to improve it; and the tasting of the sweets of an innocent melancholy a thousand times preferable to the images of mirth and impiety."

Every time that Tremerello entered my prison, he said: "No answer yet."

"Very well," I replied.

The third day, he said: "Mr. N. N. is rather unwell."

"What is the matter?"

Digitized by Google

"He does not say, but is always stretched upon his bed; he neither eats nor drinks, and is in a bad humor."

I was affected at the thought that he was suffering and had nobody to console him.

From my lips, or rather from my heart, escaped these words; "I will write him two lines."

"I will carry them this evening," said Tremerello; and he retired.

I was somewhat embarrassed on sitting down to my table. Am I doing right to renew this correspondence? Did I not just now bless my solitude as a newly found treasure? What fickleness, then, is mine! And yet the unfortunate man neither eats nor drinks; surely he is sick. Is this the moment to forsake him? My last note was bitter; it may have contributed to afflict him. Perhaps, in spite of our different ways of seeing, he would never have broken off our friendship. My billet may have seemed to him more ill-natured than it was; he may have taken it for a rupture absolute and contemptuous.

CHAPTER XLI.

I WROTE a note in these terms:

"I learn that you are not well, and am much grieved at it. I should like to be near you with all my heart, to be able to perform for you all the offices of friendship. I hope your indisposition has been the only cause of your silence during the last three days. Could you have been offended at my note the other day? I wrote it, I assure you, without the least ill-will, and with the single design of leading you to more serious subjects of conversation. If you are not in a condition to write, send me only precise news of your health: I will write you each day some little thing to divert you and remind you that I wish you well."

Never could I have expected the answer which he returned to me. It commenced thus: "I withdraw from you my friendship; if you have no occasion for mine, I have none for yours. I am not a man to pardon offences; when once rejected, I am not a man to be reconciled. Because you know that I am sick, you make hypocritical advances to me, in the hope that my sickness, by enfeebling my understanding, may dispose me to listen to your preaching." He continued in the same tone, abusing me with violence, ridiculing me, caricaturing all that I had said upon religion and morality, declaring his determination to live and die always the same; that is, in the greatest hatred and the most utter contempt of all philosophy differing from his own.

I remained stupefied.

"Pretty conversions I make," said I, with grief, and shuddering. "God is witness of the purity of my intentions!—No, I have not merited these taunts!—Well, patience; it is one disenchantment more. Let such a fellow alone, if he fancies offences to himself, to have the pleasure of not pardoning them. I am not obliged to do more than I have done."

However, after some days, my indignation subsided, and I thought that this mad letter might have been the fruit of a transient excitement. "Perhaps he is already ashamed of it," said I, "but is too proud to acknowledge his fault. Will it not be a generous act, now that he has had time to become calm, to write to him again?"

It cost me much to make such a sacrifice of self-love, but I made it. He who humbles himself without a base object, does not degrade himself, whatever unjust scorn may ensue.

I received in reply a letter less violent, but not less insulting. The implacable man said he admired my evangelical moderation.

"Let us then," he proceeded, "resume our correspondence; but let us speak out clearly. We do not like each other. We will write, each for his own amusement, casting freely upon paper all that comes into our heads: you, your seraphic imaginations, and I, my blasphemies; you, your ecstacies upon the dignity of man and woman; I, the ingenuous narrative of my profanations; I, hoping to convert you, and you, to convert me. Answer me if this compact pleases you."

Digitized by Google

I replied; "What you propose is not a compact, but a mockery. I felt an abundance of good-will for you. Conscience obliges me no further, than to wish you all happiness in this life and the next."

Thus ended my secret correspondence with this man—who knows, less wicked, perhaps, than soured by misfortune, and exasperated by despair?

CHAPTER XLII.

Once more I sincerely blessed my solitude, and for some time again my days passed by without incident.

Summer was ended; and in the latter part of September the heat diminished. October came; and then I was glad that I had a room which in winter would be a good one. But lo! one morning the jailer told me he had orders to change my prison.

"Where do I go?"

"A few steps, into a cooler chamber."

"And why not think of that when I was dying of heat, when the air was alive with insects, and my bed filled with bugs?"

"The order did not come before."

"Patience! Come on."

Although I had suffered much in this prison, it gave me pain to leave it, not only because it must necessarily be excellent in the cold season, but for many other reasons. There were those ants that I loved and nourished with, I might almost say, paternal care, if the expression were not ridiculous. A few days before, the dear spider, of which I have already spoken, had emigrated, I know not why; but I said to myself, "Who knows whether she will not remember me and return? And now that I am leaving it, if she returns, she will find the room empty, or if she finds a new inmate, he will be, perhaps, an enemy of spiders, and with his slipper will brush away this beautiful web, and crush the poor animal. Besides, has not this gloomy prison been embellished by the pity of Zanze? Upon this window she so often leaned and generously let fall crumbs of bread for my ants. There, she was accustomed to sit; here, she told me such a story; there, such another; and there, she bent over my table, while her tears flowed!

The room to which I was removed, was also under the leads; but it had two windows, one to the north and the other to the west, the abode of perpetual damps, and horribly cold during the rigorous months of winter.

The window on the west was very large; that on the north was small, and situated above my bed.

I went to the first and saw that it looked upon the palace of the patriarch. Other prisons were also near mine, in a wing of small extent upon the right, and in a projection of the edifice which stood in front. In this projection were two prisons, one above the other. The lower one had an enormous window, through which I saw a man walking within, richly dressed. It was Signor Caporali di Cesena. He perceived me, made some signs, and we gave each other our names.

I wished then to examine where my other window looked to. I placed the table upon the bed, and upon the table, a chair, and having climbed up, I found myself on a level with a part of the roof of the palace, beyond which appeared a beautiful part of the city and the lagune.*

I stopped to contemplate this fine view; and hearing my door open, I did not move. It was the jailer; who, seeing me mounted so high, and forgetting that I could not, like a mouse, pass through the bars, thought that I was trying to escape. In the first moment of his trouble, and in spite of a gout in the hip which tormented him, he sprang upon the bed and caught me by the legs, screaming like an eagle.

"But," said I, "do you not see, you old dunce, that these bars prevent my escape? Do you not understand that I climbed up here from mere curiosity?"

* Lagune is the name given to the channels formed by the sea, at Venice.

Digitized by Google

"I see, sir, I see; I understand . . . but come down, I tell you, come down; there are so many temptations to escape."

I was obliged to come down; and did so, laughing.

CHAPTER XLIII.

At the windows of the lateral prisons, I recognized six other persons confined for political reasons.

Here, then, at the moment when I was preparing myself for a solitude greater than before, I found myself in a sort of world. At first, I was discontented—whether my long, hermit-like seclusion had already made my disposition unsocial, or the unpleasant issue of my relations with Julian had made me distrustful.

Nevertheless, the little conversation that we had together, partly by words, partly by signs, soon appeared to me beneficial, if not as a stimulant to cheerfulness, at least, as an amusement. I never said a word to any one of my relations with Julian; we had both given our word of honor that the secret should remain buried with us. If I speak of it in these pages, it is because those whose eyes they may meet, whoever they are, will not be able to conjecture, who, out of so many wretches confined in these prisons, took the name of Julian.

To these new acquaintances above-mentioned, among my fellow-prisoners, was added another, which was also very pleasant.

From my large window, I saw beyond the projection of the prison in front, a long extent of roofs surmounted with chimneys, terraces, steeples, cupolas, which faded away in the perspective of the sea and sky. In the house nearest to me, which formed a wing of the patriarchal mansion, dwelt a good family, who acquired a right to my gratitude, by manifesting to me, through signs, the pity with which I inspired them. A bow, a word of love to the unhappy, is a great charity!

At first, from a window of this house, a little child of nine or ten years old, raised his little hands towards me, and I heard him cry out:

"Mamma, mamma! they have put a prisoner up yonder in the *leads!* Poor prisoner, who are you?"

"I am Silvio Pellico," I replied.

Another boy, a little larger, ran also to the window, and shouted:

"You are Silvio Pellico."

"Yes, and you, dear children?"

"I am called Antonio S——, and my brother, Giuseppe."

Then he turned round and said; "What else must I ask him?"

And a lady, whom I supposed to be their mother, standing half concealed, suggested kind words to the dear children, which they repeated to me, and I thanked them with the most lively tenderness.

These conversations were a small matter, and it behooved us not to carry them too far, lest the jailer might call to us. But each day, morning, noon and evening, they were repeated, to my great consolation. When the candles were lighted, the lady closed the window, and the boys shouted: "Good night, Silvio!" And she, emboldened by the obscurity, repeated in a voice of emotion: "Good night, Silvio! Courage!"

When the children were at breakfast or luncheon, they said to me: "Oh, if we could give you some of our coffee and milk! Oh, if we could give you some of our cakes! The day you gain your liberty, remember to come and see us! We will give you some cakes, good and warm, and so many kisses!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

The month of October brought with it the most dismal of my anniversaries. I had been arrested on the 13th of this month of the year preceding. Several other sad remembrances recurred in connection with this month. Two years before, in October, a man of merit,

Digitized by Google

whom I much esteemed, was, by a fatal accident, drowned in the Tecino. In October, three years before, Odoardo Briche, a young man whom I loved as if he had been my son, killed himself involuntarily with a musket. In my boyhood, another grievous affliction had befallen me in October.

Although I was not superstitious, this gloomy concurrence of remembrances so tragical, filled me with sadness.

While conversing from my window with these children and my companions in captivity, I feigned cheerfulness, but scarcely re-entered into my den, an inexpressible load of grief weighed down my soul.

I took my pen to compose some verses, or to apply myself to some other literary occupation, and an irresistible force seemed to constrain me to write some totally different thing. What? Long letters that I could not send; long letters to my dear family, in which I poured out all my heart. I wrote them upon the table and then scraped them off. They were filled with warm expressions of tenderness, and remembrances of the happiness I had enjoyed with my parents, and brothers and sisters, so indulgent and so loving. The violent longings that I felt to see them, stirred up within me an infinity of sweet affections. After having written hours and hours, there always remained other feelings to be unfolded.

This was to repeat my biography under a new form, and to create for myself an illusion by reviewing the past, and forcibly fix my eyes upon that happy time that was no more. But, O God! how many times, after drawing a most lively picture of one of the happiest passages of my life, after exciting my imagination to such a degree as to believe myself with the persons to whom I was talking, all at once I have recollected the present, dropped my pen and shuddered with horror! Moments truly fearful were these! I had already experienced them before, but never with such convulsions as then assailed me.

I attributed these convulsions, and these horrible mental sufferings, to the excessive excitement of my feelings, occasioned by the epistolary form which I gave to these writings, by addressing them to individuals so dear to me.

I tried to do something else, and could not; I wished at least to abandon the epistolary form, but could not. As soon as I took my pen and commenced writing, it always resulted in a letter full of tenderness and grief.

"Am I no longer a free agent?" said I; "is not this necessity of doing what I would not, a disorder of my brain? This never happened before. It might have been explained in the early part of my imprisonment, but now that I am used to the life of a prison; now that my imagination ought to be calm in all respects; now that my mind is so much nourished by philosophical and religious reflection, how am I becoming the slave of the blind desires of my heart, and growing so childish? Let us apply ourselves to something else."

Then I sought to pray, or to dive into the study of the German language. Vain efforts! I discovered myself in the act of writing a new letter.

CHAPTER XLV.

Such a state was a real malady; I do not know whether I ought not to call it a species of somnambulism. It was, doubtless, the effect of great weariness produced by watching and tension of mind.

The evil went further: my nights passed constantly without sleep and generally feverish. It was in vain that I ceased to take coffee; my sleeplessness was the same. There seemed to be in me two men, one always wishing to write letters, and the other to do something else. "Well," said I, "let us combine the two; still write letters, but write them in German; by that means, we shall learn the language."

Henceforth, I wrote everything in bad German; in this manner, I made at least some progress in that study.

In the morning, after long watching, my weary head fell into a kind of stupor. Then,

Digitized by Google

in my dreams, or rather in my delirium, I thought I saw my father, my mother, or others that I loved, giving way to despair on account of my fate. I heard their piteous sobbings, and immediately awoke, frightened and sobbing also.

Sometimes, during these brief dreams, I seemed to hear my mother consoling the others, and entering my prison with them, and addressing most holy words to me upon the duty of resignation; and when I was most rejoiced at her fortitude, and that of the rest, all at once she burst into tears, and they all wept together. No one can express what was then the anguish of my soul.

To escape from so much misery, I tried the plan of not going to bed at all; I kept the light burning the whole night, and remained at my table reading and writing. But what! There came a moment when I read perfectly awake, but without understanding anything, my head having absolutely no power to collect its ideas. Then I copied something, but copied while thinking of everything but that which I was writing; thinking of my afflictions.

Yet if I lay down, it was still worse; no position was supportable: I was disturbed with convulsive agitations, and was soon obliged to get up; or if I slumbered a little, those despairing dreams made me worse than remaining awake.

My prayers were dry, and nevertheless I repeated them often; not with superfluity of words, but an ejaculation to God—to that God-made man, who experienced all the sufferings of humanity.

During these horrible nights, my imagination sometimes became so excited that, although awake, I seemed to hear, at one time, groans in my prison; at other times, stifled laughter. From my infancy up, I had never believed in sorcerers or spirits, and now these laughs and groans terrified me. I knew not how to account for them, and was constrained to doubt whether I was not the sport of some mysterious and malignant powers.

Many times I seized the light with a trembling hand, and saw if nobody was concealed under my bed, to mock me. Often the suspicion occurred to me, that I had been removed from my room and transferred to this, because there was some trap or some secret aperture in the wall, from which these swaggerers could spy out all I did, and cruelly divert themselves by terrifying me.

When I was seated at my table, some one seemed now to pluck me by the coat, now to have given a push to a book that fell to the earth: again, I thought somebody came behind me, and blew my candle to put it out. Then I sprung to my feet, looked around, walked the room with suspicion, and asked myself whether I was mad or in my senses; for of those things that I heard and saw, I no longer knew what was reality or illusion, and cried out, in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

CHAPTER XLVI.

On one occasion, having gone to bed a little before the dawn of day, I felt perfectly sure of having put my handkerchief under my pillow. After a moment's slumber, I awoke as usual, and imagined they were strangling me. I perceived that my neck was tightly bound. Strange affair! It was bound with my own handkerchief, closely tied, with many knots. I would have sworn that I had not made those knots, that I had not touched my handkerchief since I placed it under my pillow. I must have done it in a dream or a fit of delirium, without retaining any memory of it; but I could not believe it; and from that time forth I had an apprehension each night of being strangled.

I am aware how ridiculous such follies must appear to others: but to me, who experienced them, they caused so much harm, that I shudder at them still.

They vanished every morning; and whilst the daylight lasted, I felt my mind so much strengthened against these terrors, that it seemed impossible that I could ever suffer them again. But at sunset I commenced

Digitized by Google

shuddering again, and each night brought back the foolish extravagances of the preceding.

The greater my weakness was in the dark, the more vigorous were my efforts during the day, to appear cheerful in conversation with my companions, the two children of the patriarchal mansion, and my jailers. No one hearing me joke as I did, would have imagined the miserable infirmity to which I was subject. By these efforts I hoped to fortify myself; but they availed nothing. These nocturnal visions, that in the day I called foolish illusions, returned at evening, for me, frightful realities.

If I had dared, I would have petitioned the commission to change my room, but was unable to make up my mind to it, for fear of being laughed at.

All reasonings, all resolutions, all studies, and all prayers being useless, the horrible idea of being wholly and for ever forsaken of God took possession of me.

All the wicked sophisms against Providence, which, in a state of reason a few weeks before, appeared so absurd, now came to roar in my head like a wild beast, and seemed to me worthy of attention.

I struggled for some time against these temptations, then abandoned myself to them.

I disowned the goodness of religion; and said, as I had heard the most furious atheist say, and as Julian lately wrote to me, "Religion is good for nothing but to enfeeble the mind." I had the hardihood to believe, that by renouncing God, my mind would recover its forces. Mad confidence! I denied God, and did not know how to deny the existence of those invisible and mischievous beings that seemed to surround me, and feed upon my grief.

What terms can describe this torment? Is it sufficient to call it a disease? or was it at the same time a chastisement from Heaven to humble my pride, and teach me, that without special light I might become an unbeliever like Julian, and even more foolish than he?

However it may be, God delivered me from so great an evil, at a moment when I least expected it. One morning, after taking my coffee, I was seized with violent vomitings and colic. I thought I was poisoned. After the fatigues of vomiting, I was all in perspiration, and went to bed. Towards noon I went to sleep, and slept peacefully until evening.

I awoke, surprised at so great a rest; and feeling no further want of sleep, I got up. "When up," said I, "I shall be stronger against my accustomed terrors."

But the terrors came not. I rejoiced at it, and in the fulness of my gratitude, returning to God, I cast myself upon the ground to adore Him, and to demand His pardon for having denied Him many days. This effusion of joy exhausted my strength; and, remaining some time upon my knees, leaning upon a chair, I was again seized with drowsiness, and slept in that position.

Then, whether after one or more hours I know not, I half awoke; but scarcely taking time to throw myself, dressed, upon the bed, I slept again until daybreak. I was drowsy the whole day; at night I lay down early, and slept the entire night.

What crisis had taken place in me, I know not, but I was cured.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The nausea which my stomach had suffered for a long time ceased, my headaches disappeared, and then came an extraordinary appetite. My digestion was good, and my strength increased. Wonderful Providence! It had taken away my strength to humble me; it restored it to me because the epoch of condemnations approached, and wished not that I should succumb to their announcement.

On the 24th of November, one of our companions, Doctor Foresti, was taken from the prison of the Leads, and removed, I could not learn where. The jailer, his wife, and the *secondini*, were dejected; but none of them was willing to clear up the mystery.

"Why do you want to know," said Treme-

Digitized by Google

rello to me, "if there is nothing good to learn? I have already told you too much, too much."

"Come on, why keep it a secret?" said I, shuddering. "Have I not understood you? He is then condemned to death!"

"Who? . . . . he? . . . Doctor Foresti?" . . . .

Tremerello hesitated; but the desire of talking was not the least of his virtues.

"You shall not say afterwards that I am a babbler; I really did not want to open my mouth on these things. Remember that you forced me."

"Yes, yes; I forced you. But come! tell me all. What has happened to poor Foresti?"

"Ah! sir, they have made him pass over the *Bridge of Sighs!* He is in the criminal prisons! Sentence of death has been read to him and two others besides."

"And this sentence will be executed? When? Oh! the unhappy men! And who are the other two?"

"I know nothing more about it—nothing more. The sentences have not yet been made public. It is said in Venice that there will be several commutations of punishment. God grant that the sentence of death may not be executed upon either of them! God grant that if all cannot escape death, you may, at least! I bear to you as much affection—pardon the liberty—as if you were my brother."

And he went away greatly moved. The reader may imagine in what agitation I spent all that day, the following night, and the many other days during which I could find out nothing more.

This uncertainty lasted a month. At length, the sentences relating to the first trials were made public. They affected many persons; nine of whom were condemned to death, and then, by grace, to *carcere duro*—some for twenty years, others for fifteen (and in both cases they were to undergo their punishment in the fortress of Spielberg, near the city of Brünn, in Moravia); others for ten years or less (the latter went to the fortress of Lubiana).

Was this commutation of punishment, granted to all those of the first trial, a proof that death would spare also those of the second? or, had indulgence been extended to the first only, because they had been arrested before the proclamation which had been published against secret societies? And would all the rigors of the law fall upon the second?

"The solution of these doubts cannot be far off," said I. "Thanks be to Heaven that I have time to foresee death and prepare myself for it."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

My only thought was to die like a Christian, and with due courage. I felt a temptation to escape the gibbet by suicide, but it left me. What merit was it not to permit one's self to be choked by the executioner, but to become one's own executioner? To save one's honor? And is it not childishness to suppose it is more honor to cheat the executioner than not to do it, when one is obliged to die? Even had I not been a Christian, suicide, when I reflected upon it, would have appeared a foolish satisfaction, and a useless thing.

"If the term of my life has come," I continued, "am I not fortunate that it comes in such a manner as to allow me time to compose myself, and purify my conscience by desires and penitence worthy of a man? Judging like the vulgar, that of the gibbet is the worst of deaths; but in the judgment of the wise, is not that death preferable to so many others which happen by disease, which, by enfeebling the intellect, leaves no more opportunity for the mind to rise above the grovelling thoughts of earth?"

The justness of such reasoning penetrated my mind so profoundly, that the horror of death, and even of this species of death, was entirely removed from me. I meditated long upon the sacraments which were to strengthen me for the solemn moment, and deemed myself in a condition to receive them with such dispositions as were necessary to experience

Digitized by Google

their efficacy. Should I have preserved this elevation of soul which I thought I possessed, this peace, this indulgent regard toward those who hated me, this joy of sacrificing my life to the will of God, if I had been led forth to execution? Alas! man is full of contradictions, and when he appears most firm and holy, he may, in an instant, fall into weakness and guilt. Whether I should then have died worthily, God alone knows. I do not think well enough of myself to affirm it.

Meanwhile the probable approach of death so impressed this idea upon my imagination, that to die seemed not only possible, but announced by infallible presentiments. No hope of evading this fate any longer entered my heart, and at every sound of footsteps or of keys, at every opening of my door, I said to myself: "Courage! perhaps they are coming for me to hear my sentence. Let us listen to it with calmness and dignity, and bless the Lord."

I meditated what I should write for the last time to my family, and particularly to my father, to my mother, and to each of my brothers and sisters; and revolving in my mind expressions of love so profound and sacred, I was melted with tenderness; I wept, and those tears did not unnerve my resigned will.

How could my sleeplessness have returned? Yet how different from the former! I no longer heard laughter or groans in my room, nor raved of spirits or men concealed. The night was more delicious to me than the day, because I concentrated myself more in prayer. I usually went to bed at four o'clock, and slept peacefully about two hours. After waking, I remained late in bed to rest, and rose about eleven.

One evening I had lain down a little sooner than usual, and had slept scarcely a quarter of an hour, when, waking suddenly, I saw a brilliant light upon the wall opposite to me. I was afraid I had relapsed into the old delirium; but what I saw was not an illusion. The light came from the little north window, under which I was lying.

I jumped to the floor, took the table and ut it upon the bed, and placing a chair upon it, ascended; and saw one of the most beautiful and terrible spectacles of fire that could be imagined.

It was a grand conflagration, at the distance of a musket-shot from our prison. It broke out at the building containing the public bakeries, which it entirely consumed.

The night was very dark, which rendered more conspicuous the vast globes of flame and smoke, agitated as they were by a furious wind. Sparks flew on all sides, as if they rained from the heavens. The neighboring lagune reflected the fire. A multitude of gondolas went and came. I pictured to myself the alarm and danger of those who dwelt in the burning building and in those adjacent, and sympathized with them. I heard the distant voices of men and women calling to each other: "Tognina! Mormolo! Beppo! Zanze!" Again the name of Zanze rung in my ears! There are thousands of that name in Venice; yet I feared that it might be that one whose memory was so grateful to me. Could the unhappy girl be there! perhaps enveloped in flames? Oh, that I could fly to her rescue!

Panting, shuddering, admiring, I remained at the window till daybreak; then I descended, oppressed with mortal sadness, and fancying the damage much greater than it was. Tremerello informed me that only the bakeries and the stores attached to them, with a considerable quantity of flour in sacks, were burned.

CHAPTER XLIX.

My imagination was still deeply impressed by the sight of this fire, when, a few nights after (I had not yet gone to bed, and was seated at my table, studying, all benumbed with cold), lo! some voices close by me screamed: "*Fire! fire! O blessed Virgin! we are lost!*" They were those of the jailer, his wife, their children, and the *secondini*.

The cold left me in an instant; I sprung to my feet, covered with perspiration, and looked all around, to ascertain if the flames could yet be seen. They could not.

Digitized by Google

Yet the fire was in the palace itself, in some office-room near the prisons.

One of the *secondini* exclaimed: "Master, if the fire spreads, what shall we do with these gentlemen confined in the *cage?*"

The jailer replied; "I have not the heart to let them burn. Yet I cannot open the prisons without the order of the commission. Come on! run quick and ask permission."

"I am going at once, sir, but the answer will not come in time, depend upon it."

Where now was that heroic resignation which I thought myself so sure of possessing while thinking of death? Why did the idea of being burnt alive throw me into a fever? as if it were more pleasant to be strangled than to be burned! I made this reflection, and was ashamed of my fear; I was about to call to the jailer to open the door to me in charity, but I restrained myself. Nevertheless, I was afraid.

"Behold, then," said I, "what will be my courage, if, escaping from the fire, I am led forth to death! I shall restrain myself, I shall conceal my cowardice from others, but I shall tremble. But . . . is it not courage to feel afraid, yet to act as if we had no fear? Is it not generosity to give voluntarily what we regret to give? Is it not obedience to obey, even when we do it with reluctance?"

The tumult in the house of the jailer was so great, that it indicated the danger to be still increasing. The *secondino* who went to ask permission to bring us out of these places, did not return! At length, I seemed to hear his voice. I listened, but could not distinguish his words. I wait, hope; but in vain! Nobody comes. Can it be possible that they are not allowed to save us from the fire? and if there were no longer any way of escape? If the jailer and his family had hard work to secure their own safety, and nobody else thought of the poor prisoners?

"But," I resumed, "this is neither philosophy nor religion. Had I not better prepare myself to see the flames enter my room and devour me?"

In the meanwhile, the clamor diminished by degrees, and at length I heard it no more. Is this a proof that the fire has stopped? or that all who could, have taken flight, and none remain here but victims abandoned to a cruel death?

The continuation of the silence tranquillized me: I knew that the fire had been extinguished. I went to bed, reproaching myself with the anxiety I had suffered, as a cowardice; and now that there was no longer danger of being burnt, I was sorry that I had not perished in the flames, rather than be put to death, in a few days, by the hand of man.

The next morning I learnt from Tremerello the particulars of the fire, and laughed at the fear that, he said, he had felt, as if my own had not been equal to or greater than his.

CHAPTER L.

On the 11th of January, 1822, about nine in the morning, Tremerello took an opportunity to come to me, and said with much agitation:

"Do you know that in the isle of St. Michael di Murano, a short distance from Venice, there is a prison in which are more than a hundred *carbonari?*"

"You have told me that several times already. Well—what do you want to say? Come, speak. Perhaps some of them have been condemned?"

"Precisely."

"Who?"

"I do not know."

"Can my unhappy Maroncelli be one?"

"Ah! sir, I know not, I know not who they are."

And he went away disturbed and regarding me with a look of compassion.

A little after, the jailer entered, accompanied by the *secondini* and a man whom I had never seen. The jailer appeared confused. The stranger began:

"Signor, the commission have given orders that you should come with me."

"Let us go," I replied. "And you, who are you?"

"I am the keeper of the prisons of St. Michael, whither you are to be transferred."

Digitized by Google

The jailer of *the Leads* gave up to him my money which he had in his hands. I asked and obtained permission to make some present to the *secondini*. I put my clothes in order, took my Bible under my arm and started. Whilst I was descending the long stairs, Tremerello secretly pressed my hand, as if he would say, "Unhappy man! thou art lost!"

We went out by a gate that looked upon the lagune; where a gondola with two *secondini* of the new jailer awaited our coming.

I entered the gondola agitated by contending emotions—a certain regret at leaving the residence of the *Leads*, where I had suffered much, but where I had formed some attachments, and where I had been loved in return, —the pleasure of finding myself in the open air after so long a period of seclusion, of seeing the heavens, the waters, and the city, without the gloomy, square grate of iron—the remembrance of the joyous gondola, which in happier times bore me upon this same lagune, and of the gondolas of the lake of Como, of Lake Maggiore, and the little boats upon the Po, and those of the Rhone and the Saone. Oh! smiling years, vanished for ever! Who in the world has enjoyed happiness equal to mine?

Born of the tenderest parents, in that condition which is not poverty, and which, holding a middle place between the poor and the rich, affords a facility for gaining a correct knowledge of both these states—a condition which I consider most advantageous for cultivating the affections;—after an infancy cherished by the sweetest cares of home, I had gone to Lyons to live with a cousin of my mother's, very rich and very worthy of his riches. There, all that could serve to enchant a heart formed for elegance and love had delighted the first ardor of my youth. Thence returning into Italy, and settled at Milan with my parents, I had continued to study, and to love society and books, finding everywhere excellent friends and flattering applause. Monti and Foscolo, although enemies to each other, were equally kind to me. I was most attached to the latter; and this man so irascible, whose rudeness gained him so many enemies, was to me all gentleness and cordiality, and I had for him a tender veneration. Other literary men of distinction testified an equal regard for me, and I loved them in return. No envy or calumny ever assailed me, or at least they came from people so low that they could not injure me.

At the fall of the kingdom of Italy, my father had again taken up his residence at Turin with the rest of my family, and I, ever postponing my re-union with these beloved objects, had ended by remaining at Milan, where I was surrounded with so much happiness that I could not induce myself to renounce it.

Among other excellent friends, three in Milan held the highest place in my heart; D. Pietro Borsieri, Monsignore Lodovico di Bresne, and Count Luigi Porro Lambertenghi. To these was added afterwards, the Count Federigo Confalonieri.

Having undertaken the education of the two sons of Porro, I was to them as a father, and to their father as a brother. To that house flowed not only all the cultivated mind which Milan possessed, but a crowd of distinguished travellers. There I became acquainted with Madame de Staël, Schlegel, Davis, Byron, Hobhouse, Brougham, and many other illustrious persons from various parts of Europe. Oh! how the acquaintance of men of merit expands the soul and stimulates it to self-ennoblement! Yes, I was happy! I would not have exchanged my lot for that of a prince! And from a lot so bright, to fall into the hands of jailers, to be dragged from prison to prison, and to end by being strangled, or perish in chains!

CHAPTER LI.

Occupied with these reflections, I arrived at St. Michael, and was locked up in a room which presented a view of a court, the lagune, and the beautiful island of Murano. I inquired after Maroncelli from the jailer, his wife and four *secondini*, but they made me short

Digitized by Google

visits, full of distrust, and would tell me nothing.

Nevertheless, where there are five or six persons, it is rare not to find one inclined to compassion and willing to speak. Such a one I found, and learned what follows:

Maroncelli, after a long, solitary confinement, had been put with the Count Camillo Laderchi; the latter, a few days before, had gone out of prison, having been declared innocent, and Maroncelli was alone once more. Of our companions there had been set at liberty as innocent, Professor Gian-Domenico Romagnosi and Count Giovanni Arrivabene. Captain Rezia and Signore Canova were together, and Professor Ressi lay dying in a prison contiguous to theirs.

"The sentence of those who are not gone, has come, then," said I. "And what are they waiting for, to let us know it? Perhaps till poor Ressi dies, or is in a condition to hear his sentence; is it not so?"

"I believe so."

Every day I inquired after the unfortunate sufferer.

"He has lost his speech;—he has recovered it, but is delirious and comprehends nothing;—he gives a few signs of life; he often spits blood, and is delirious again;—he is worse;—he is better;—he is in agony."

Such were the answers given me for many weeks. At last it was told me one morning: "He is dead!"

I dropped a tear for him, and consoled myself with the thought that he had been ignorant of his condemnation.

On the following day, the 12th of February, 1822, at ten in the morning, the jailer came for me. He conducted me into the hall of the commission and withdrew. The president, the prosecuting officer and two assistant judges were in their seats: they arose.

The president, in an accent of noble commiseration, told me that the sentence had come, that the judgment was terrible, but that it had already been mitigated by the Emperor. The prosecutor read to me the sentence: "Condemned to death." Afterwards the imperial rescript: "The punishment is commuted to fifteen years of *carcere duro* in the fortress of Spielberg."

I answered: "The will of God be done!" It was in truth my intention to receive this terrible blow like a Christian, and neither to show nor to nourish resentment against any one whatever.

The president praised my calmness and counselled me to preserve it always, adding that this resignation might, perhaps, within two or three years, be worthy of a still greater mercy. (Instead of two or three, it was many more.)

The other judges also addressed me with words of kindness and hope. But one of them, who, during my trial had always shown himself most hostile, said to me something polite, which nevertheless seemed cutting. This courtesy seemed to be belied by his looks, in which, I could have sworn, there was a smile of joy and insult.

Now I would no longer swear that it was so; I might very well have been deceived. But then my blood was boiling, and I could scarcely refrain from bursting into a fury. I dissembled, and whilst they praised my Christian patience, I had already secretly lost it.

"To-morrow," said the prosecutor, "it will be our painful duty to announce to you your sentence in public; it is a formality that cannot be dispensed with."

"Be it so," I replied.

"From this moment," he added, "you can enjoy the company of your friend."

And calling the jailer, they again consigned me to him, telling him to put me with Maroncelli.

CHAPTER LII.

What a delicious moment was it for my friend and me to see each other again after a separation of a year and three months, and so many sufferings! The joys of friendship made us for an instant almost forget our condemnation.

Digitized by Google

Soon, however, I tore myself from his arms to take my pen and write to my father. I ardently desired that the announcement of my sad fate should be communicated to my family by myself rather than by others, in order that the anguish of their loving hearts might be soothed by my language of peace and religious resignation. The judges promised me to despatch this letter as soon as possible.

After this, Maroncelli spoke to me of his trial, and I of mine. We related in turn, our prison adventures, then went to the window and saluted three of our friends who were at theirs; two of them were Canova and Rezia, who were together, the former condemned to six years of *carcere duro*, and the other to three; the third was Doctor Cæsar Aunari, who, during the preceding months, had been my neighbor under the *Leads*. He had not been condemned, and being declared innocent, he soon after left the prison.

Mutual converse formed an agreeable entertainment for us during the whole day and evening. But after we had gone to bed and the light was extinguished, and silence returned, I found it impossible to sleep; my head burned, and my heart bled in thinking of my family. Will my old parents bear up against so great a misfortune? Will their other children be sufficient to console them? They were all as much loved as I, and much more worthy of it; but do a father and mother ever find in the children that remain, a compensation for the one they have lost?

Would that I had thought only of my relations and others who were dear to me. Their remembrance afflicted and softened me. But I thought also of the supposed smile of joy and insult of the judge, of the trial, of the cause of my condemnation, of political passions, of the fate of so many of my friends,—and I was then incapable of judging any of my adversaries with indulgence. God subjected me to a great proof! My duty would have been to sustain it with courage. I could not! I would not! The satisfaction of hating had a charm above the sweets of forgiveness. I passed a night of hell.

In the morning I did not pray. The universe seemed to me the work of a power hostile to goodness. Many times already, I had been the calumniator of God, but I should not have believed that I could become so again, and that too in a few hours! Julian, in his greatest transports of rage, could not have been more impious than I was. Revolving thoughts of hatred, especially when a man is smitten with a grievous misfortune that ought to make him more religious, becomes wicked even when it might have been just. Yes, even when it might have been just; for hatred is impossible without pride. And who art thou, O wretched mortal, to pretend that any of thy equals judge thee severely; to pretend that no one could have injured thee with honest intentions, in the belief that he was acting with justice; to complain if God permits thee to suffer in one way rather than in another?

I felt unhappy not to be able to pray; but where pride reigns, a man finds no other God but himself.

I could have wished to commend my desolate parents to a supreme Comforter, and I no longer believed in him!

CHAPTER LIII.

At nine in the morning Maroncelli and I were placed in a gondola and conducted to the city. We landed at the palace of the Doge, and ascended to the prisons. They put us into a room that had been occupied a few days before by Signor Caporali, who had been transferred, I know not where. Nine or ten *sbirri* were seated there to guard us, and we promenaded the room, awaiting the moment when we should be led to the piazza. The delay was long. The prosecutor did not make his appearance till noon, to announce to us that we must go. The physician came also, and suggested to us to drink a glass of mint-water; we accepted it and were grateful, not so much for that as for the heartfelt compassion that the good old man testified for us. It was Doctor Dosmo. The

Digitized by Google

chief *sbirro* then came up and **put** handcuffs upon us, and we followed him **at**tended by the other *sbirri*. In descending the magnificent staircase of the *Giants*, we recalled to mind the Doge Marino Faliéro, decapitated there; we entered the grand portico which leads from the court of the palace to the *Piazzetta*, and arriving there we turned to the left towards the lagune. In the middle of the Piazzetta was the scaffold upon which we were to mount. From the staircase of *Giants* to the scaffold were ranged two files of Austrian soldiers, between whom we passed.

Mounted upon the scaffold, we looked around, and saw an immense crowd of people agitated with terror. In various directions other soldiers were drawn up in the distance. We were told that there were cannons everywhere with their matches lighted.

It was on this Piazzetta in the September of 1820, a month before my arrest, a mendicant had said to me: "This is the place of misfortune."

I recollected this mendicant, and thought to myself: who knows if he is not then also among so many thousands of spectators, and perhaps recognizes me?

The Austrian captain cried out to us to turn towards the palace and look up. We obeyed, and saw upon the balcony an officer of the court with a paper in his hand. It was the sentence. He read it in a loud voice.

Profound silence reigned until he came to these words: "Condemned to death." Then arose a general murmur of compassion. A new silence succeeded, that they might hear the rest of the reading, and a new murmur received the words: "condemned to *carcere duro*, Maroncelli for twenty years, and Pellico for fifteen."

The captain motioned to us to descend. We once more cast a look around us and descended. We re-entered the court, mounted the staircase, and returned to the room whence we had been taken; our handcuffs were removed and we were sent back to St. Michael.

CHAPTER LIV.

Those who were condemned before us had already set out for Lubiana and Spielberg, accompanied by a commissary of police. Now the return of the same commissary was expected, that he might conduct us to our destination. This interval lasted a month.

All my time was there spent in talking and listening to the conversation of others to divert my mind. Maroncelli moreover read me his literary compositions, and I read mine to him. One evening I read from my window to Canova, Rezia and Armari, my *Ester d'Engaddi*, and the next evening, the *Iginia d'Asti*.

But at night I groaned and wept, and obtained little or no sleep.

I desired, and at the same time dreaded, to learn how the news of my calamity had been received by my parents.

At length I received a letter from my father. What was my grief to see that my last letter to him had not been sent immediately, as I had so earnestly begged of the officer! My unhappy father, who always flattered himself that I should be acquitted, having one day taken up the Milan Gazette, had read in it my sentence. He himself related to me this cruel discovery, and left me to imagine how his soul had been rent by it.

Oh! how, in the boundless compassion which I felt for him, for my mother and all my family, how I burned with indignation that my letter had not been carefully forwarded. There may have been no evil motive in this delay, but I imagined an infernal one; I thought I perceived in it a refinement of barbarity, a desire that the blow should fall as heavily as possible, even upon my innocent relations.

I should have liked to be able to shed an ocean of blood to punish this fancied cruelty.

Now that I judge of it dispassionately, I do not regard it as probable. This delay doubtless was caused by nothing but negligence.

Furious as I was, I learned, with shudder-

Digitized by Google

ing, that my companions intended to take communion at Easter, before their departure, and I felt that I ought not to do it, having such an unwillingness to forgive. That I should have given such scandal! . . . .

CHAPTER LV.

The commissary arrived at length from Germany, and came to tell us that in two days we should set out.

"I have the pleasure," he added, "of being able to give you some consolation. In returning from Spielberg, I saw at Vienna His Majesty the Emperor, who told me that your prison days would be reckoned at twelve hours instead of twenty-four. Signifying by this expression that the term of your imprisonment was shortened one-half."

This diminution was never announced to us officially, yet there was no probability that the commissary lied, inasmuch as he did not impart that news to us as a secret, but with the knowledge of the commission.

Nevertheless I could not rejoice at it. In my mind seven years and a half in irons were scarcely less dreadful than fifteen. It seemed impossible that I could live so long.

My health was again quite bad. I had severe pains in the breast accompanied with a cough, and I thought my lungs were attacked. I ate little, and that little was not digested.

Our departure took place in the night between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth of March. We were permitted to embrace our friend, Doctor Cesare Armari. A *sbirro* fettered us transversely, the right hand and the left foot, to prevent our escape. We embarked in a gondola and our guards rowed towards Fusina.

On our arrival there we found two carriages in waiting. Rezia and Canova got into one, Maroncelli and myself into the other. In the former was the commissary with two prisoners, and in the latter the under commissary with the other two. Six or seven police guards arrived with muskets and sabres; some placed inside of the carriages and some on the box completed the convoy.

To be compelled by misfortune to leave one's native land is always painful, but to leave it loaded with chains, to be led into horrible climates, destined to languish for years among *sbirri*, is a thing so heart-rending that there are no terms to express it.

Before passing the Alps, my nation became every hour more dear to me, on account of the commiseration manifested to us everywhere by those whom we met. Our condemnation having been known to the public for several weeks, we were expected in every city, in every village, in every isolated hamlet. In many places the commissaries and guards had trouble to disperse the crowd that surrounded us. The sympathy manifested for us was truly astonishing.

At Udine a touching surprise happened to us. On arriving at the inn, the commissary made them shut the gate of the court to keep out the people. He assigned us a room and ordered the servants to bring us our supper and the necessaries for sleeping. A moment after three men entered with mattresses on their shoulders. What was our astonishment to perceive that only one of them was in the service of the house and that the others were two of our acquaintances! We pretended to assist them in arranging the mattresses, and secretly pressed their hands. Tears gushed from the hearts of all of us. Oh how painful it was not to be able to shed them in each other's arms!

The commissaries did not notice this touching scene, but I suspected one of the guards of having penetrated the mystery, at the moment that the good Dario squeezed my hand. This guard was a Venetian. He looked Dario and me in the face, turned pale, and appeared to hesitate whether he ought to raise his voice, but he kept silence and turned his eyes another way, pretending to see nothing. If he did not guess that these persons were our friends, he thought, at least, they were servants of our acquaintance.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LVI.

It was scarcely daylight next morning when we left Udine. The excellent Dario was already in the street enveloped in a mantle; he saluted us again and followed us a long time. We also saw a carriage following us for two or three miles, and in it a person who waved his handkerchief; at length it returned. Who was it? We could not conjecture.

God bless all generous souls who are not ashamed to love the unfortunate. Ah! I appreciate them the more because, in the years of my misfortune, I know some cowards who disowned me, and who thought to gain something by repeating the reproaches made against me. But these were few, while the number of the former was not small.

I was mistaken in thinking that this compassion which we found in Italy would cease as soon as we should arrive in a foreign land. Ah! the good man is always the countryman of the unhappy! When we were in Illyria and Austria the same things happened as at home. This groan was universal: *Arme herren!* (poor gentlemen!)

Sometimes, in entering a place the carriages were obliged to stop, before deciding where we should lodge. Then the people pressed around us, and we heard words of consolation which truly came from the heart. The goodness of these strangers touched me more than that of my own countrymen, Oh! how grateful I was to them all! how sweet is the sympathy of our fellow men, and how sweet it is to love them!

The consolation that I derived, diminished even my hatred against those that I called my enemies.

Who knows, thought I, if I saw their faces near and they saw mine; if I were able to read their hearts and they mine, who knows that I should not be compelled to confess that there is no wickedness in them, and they, that there is none in me! Who knows but we should be constrained to mutual pity and love.

Too often men hate because they do not know each other; and if they should exchange a few words together, they would shake hands in mutual confidence.

We stopped one day at Lubiana, where Canova and Rezia were separated from us and conducted to the castle. It is easy to imagine how painful this separation was for all four.

The evening of our arrival at Lubiana and the day following, a gentleman, who was said to be, if I rightly understood, a municipal secretary, politely came to keep us company. He was a man of much humanity, and spoke of religion with tenderness and dignity. I suspected he was a priest; priests in Germany are accustomed to dress like the laity. His was one of those ingenuous faces which inspire esteem; I regretted that I could not enjoy a longer acquaintance with him, and I am sorry that I have been so heedless as to forget his name.

How sweet would it be to know thy name also, Oh! thou, young maiden, who, in a village of Styria, didst follow us in the middle of the crowd; and when our carriage stopped for a few minutes, didst salute us with both hands, and then withdrew with thy handkerchief to thine eyes, leaning upon the arm of a thoughtful young man, whose light hair denoted him to be a German, but who perhaps had been in Italy and had contracted a love for our unhappy nation.

How sweet would it be to me to know the name of each of you, venerable fathers and mothers of families, who, in various places, approached us to ask if we had parents, and who, on learning that they were still living, grew pale, exclaiming: "Oh! may God soon restore you to those wretched old people!"

CHAPTER LVII.

We arrived at the place of our destination on the 10th of April.

The city of Brünn is the Capital of Moravia, and in it is the residence of the governor of the two provinces of Moravia and Silesia.

Digitized by Google

It is situated in a delightful valley and has a certain aspect of opulence. At that time it contained many flourishing manufactures of cloths which have since fallen to decay. Its population was about thirty thousand souls.

Near its walls, on the west, rises an eminence, upon which stands the gloomy fortress of Spielberg, once the palace of the lords of Moravia, now the most rigorous prison of the Austrian monarchy. It was a very strong citadel; but the French bombarded and took it at the time of the famous battle of Austerlitz (the village of Austerlitz is at a little distance from it). It has not since been restored so as to be used as a fortress, but a part of the enclosure which was dismantled has been rebuilt. About three hundred convicts, mostly thieves and assassins, are confined in it, some sentenced to *carcere duro*, and others to *carcere durissimo*.

Carcere duro signifies the being obliged to labor, to wear a chain upon the feet, to sleep upon naked planks, and to eat the meanest food imaginable.

Carcere durissimo is to be chained in a still more dreadful manner, with a band of iron around the middle of the body, and the chain fixed to the wall in such a way that the prisoner can scarcely move about the plank that serves for his bed; the food is the same, though the law says: *bread and water*.

We prisoners of state were condemned to *carcere duro*.

In climbing the ascent of the hill, we cast our eyes behind us to say adieu to the world, uncertain whether the gulf, which was about to swallow us alive, would ever open again for us. I was calm externally, but within roared. In vain I had recourse to philosophy to recover peace; philosophy had no consolation sufficient for me.

Having left Venice in bad health, the voyage had dreadfully fatigued me; my head and all my body ached. I had a burning fever. Physical pain contributed to keep me in a passion, and probably anger in its turn aggravated my bodily sufferings.

We were consigned to the superintendent of Spielberg, by whom our names were written among those of thieves. In taking leave, the imperial commissary embraced us, and was much moved: "Gentlemen," said he, "I particularly recommend submission to you, for the least infraction of discipline might be seriously punished by the superintendent."

The act of consignment being finished, Maroncelli and I were conducted to a subterraneous passage, where two dark rooms not contiguous were open for us; and each was locked up in his dungeon.

CHAPTER LVIII.

It is a very cruel thing, after having already said adieu to so many objects, and there remain but two friends equally unhappy; ah! yes, it is a very cruel thing to separate! Maroncelli, on leaving me, saw that I was sick, and lamented in me a man whom probably he would never see again; I wept in him a flower brilliant with health, snatched perhaps for ever from the vivifying light of the sun; and that flower, how it has withered! it saw the light again one day; but, alas! in what condition!

When I found myself alone in that horrible dungeon, and heard the bolts fasten; when by the feeble light which descended from a narrow and elevated window, I distinguished the naked planks given me for a bed, and an enormous chain attached to the wall, I sat down shuddering upon the bed, and taking the chain I measured its length, thinking it was destined for me.

Half an hour after, I heard the noise of keys; the door opened; the jailer was bringing a jug of water.

"Here is your drink," said he in a rough voice, "to-morrow morning I will bring the bread."

"Thanks, good man."

"I am not good," he replied.

"So much the worse for you," said I indignantly. "And this chain," I added, "is for me, perhaps."

"Yes, sir, if you are not quiet, if you become furious or insolent; but if you are reasonable we will only put a chain on

Digitized by Google

your feet; the workman is preparing it now."

He strided slowly up and down the room, shaking his formidable bunch of massive keys, and I, with angry eyes, wondered at his gigantic old and lean person; and although the features of his face were not common, everything about him seemed to me the odious expression of a brutal severity.

Oh! how unjust are men, in judging from appearances and according to their proud prejudices! That man who, as I imagined, gaily shook his keys to make me feel his sad power; that man whom I believed to have grown harsh by a long habit of cruelty; that man was entertaining feelings of compassion for me, and certainly spoke thus in a rough tone, only to conceal this feeling. He would have liked to conceal it, that he might not appear weak, and from fear that I should be offended at it. But at the same time supposing that I was, perhaps, more unhappy than guilty, he wished to let me discover it.

Weary of his presence, and still more by his lordly airs, I thought proper to humble him by speaking to him imperiously as to a servant: "Give me some drink."

He looked at me and seemed to say: Arrogant! you must drop that habit of commanding here.

But he was silent; he bent his long back, took the jug from the ground and gave it to me. I perceived that he trembled in taking it, and attributing this trembling to old age, a mingled feeling of pity and respect tempered my pride.

"How old are you?" said I in an accent of kindness.

"Seventy-four years, sir; I have already seen many misfortunes, both of myself and others."

This allusion to his misfortunes and those of others, was attended with a new trembling at the moment when he took the jug from me; and I suspected it was the effect, not of age only, but of some generous emotion. This idea effaced from my mind the dislike which he had given me at first sight.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Fortune, sir, made a mock of me by giving me the name of a great man. My name is Schiller."

Then he told me in few words what was his country, his origin, the wars he had seen, and the wounds he had received.

He was born in Switzerland, and belonged to a family of peasants; had borne arms against the Turks under General Laudohn in the time of Maria Theresa and Joseph II., and afterwards in all the wars of Austria against France, until the fall of Napoleon.

CHAPTER LIX.

When we come to conceive a better opinion of a man whom we, at first, judged unfavorably, then noticing more closely his face, his voice, and his manners, we seem to discover evident signs of goodness. Is this discovery a reality? I suspect it to be an illusion. The same face, the same voice, the same manners, appeared, a little before, evident signs of knavery. We no sooner change our judgment of his moral qualities, than we modify the conclusions of our science of physiognomy. How many faces we venerate, because we know that similar ones have belonged to worthy men, which, if they belonged to other mortals, would appear to us by no means calculated to inspire veneration! and *vice versâ*. I once laughed very much at a lady, who, seeing a head of Catiline, and taking it for that of Collatinus, imagined she discovered in it the sublime grief of the latter for the death of Lucretia. And yet such illusions are common.

Not that there are no faces of good people that bear the characters of goodness clearly impressed upon their features, and no faces of rogues that bear as clearly the characters of vice; but I maintain that there are many of doubtful expression.

In short, when the old Schiller had advanced somewhat in my good graces, I regarded him more attentively than at first, and he was no longer disagreeable. To tell the truth, his conversation, notwithstanding a

Digitized by Google

certain rudeness, sometimes evinced traits of a noble soul.

"Corporal, as I am," said he, "they have given me for a place of retreat, the sad office of a jailer, and, God knows, if it is not more painful to me than to risk my life upon the field of battle."

I repented of having, just now, demanded of him something to drink, with haughtiness. "My dear Schiller," said I, pressing his hand, "you deny it in vain, I see that you are good; and since I have fallen into this misfortune, I thank Heaven for having appointed you my guardian."

He listened to my words, shook his head, and passing his hand across his forehead, like a man who has an unpleasant thought, he replied:

"I am bad, sir. They made me take an oath to which I will never be wanting. I am obliged to treat all prisoners, and above all, prisoners of state, without regard to their condition, without indulgence and without permitting any abuse. The Emperor knows what he is doing, and I must obey him."

"You are a brave man, and I shall respect what you regard as a duty of conscience. He who acts in the sincerity of his conscience may err, but he is pure before God."

"Poor Signor! have patience, and pity me. I will be iron in my duties, but the heart. . . the heart is full of sorrow, not to be able to relieve the unhappy: this is what I wanted to tell you."

We were both moved; he begged me to be calm, not to give way to transports of rage, as convicts often do, that he might not be compelled to treat me harshly.

He assumed then a rough tone, as if to conceal a part of his emotion, and said; "Now I must go."

Then he turned round to ask me how long I had had that wretched cough, and he launched a heavy malediction against the physician, because he did not come to see me that very evening.

"You have a galloping fever, sir," added he; "I understand it: you need at least a straw bed; but until the physician has ordered it, we cannot give it to you."

He went out, closed the door, and I stretched myself upon those hard planks, still suffering from fever, and violent pains in the breast; but less irritated, less the enemy of men, less removed from God.

CHAPTER LX.

At night, the superintendent came, accompanied by Schiller, another corporal, and two soldiers, to make an examination.

Three examinations were required each day; one in the morning, another at evening, and the third at midnight. The search extended to every corner of the prison, even to the smallest things; then the subalterns retired, and the superintendent (who morning and evening never failed in his visit) stopped some time to converse with me.

The first time that I saw this little troop, a strange thought occurred to me. Still ignorant of this annoying custom, and delirious with fever, I imagined they had come to murder me, and seized the long chain which lay near me, to break the skull of the first that should approach.

"What are you doing?" said the superintendent. "We do not come to hurt you: this is a visit of mere formality to all the cells, to assure ourselves that there is nothing out of order."

I hesitated; but when I saw Schiller advance towards me and amicably offer me his hand, his paternal aspect inspired me with confidence; I let go the chain and took his hand within my own.

"Oh, how it burns!" said he to the superintendent. "If we could only give him a straw bed."

He pronounced these words with an expression of sorrow so sincere, so affectionate, that I was touched.

The superintendent felt my pulse, and testified his compassion. He was a man of genteel manners, but durst not take upon himself any decision.

Digitized by Google

"Here everything is rigor, even for me," said he. "If I do not execute to the letter what is enjoined, I run the risk of being deprived of my place."

Schiller protruded his lips, and I would have bet that he thought to himself, "If I were superintendent, I would not carry my fears to that extent. It could never be reckoned a great crime to adopt a decision so well justified by necessity, and so harmless to the government."

When I was alone, my heart, which had been for some time incapable of profound religious feelings, became softened, and I prayed. It was a prayer of benediction upon the head of Schiller; adding this petition: "Enable me, O God, to discover also in the others some good quality which may attach me to them. I accept all the torments of imprisonment, but permit me to love! deliver me from the torment of hating my fellows!"

At midnight, I heard many steps in the passage. The keys rattled, the door opened, and the corporal, with two guards, entered to make their visit.

"Where is my old Schiller?" said I, with solicitude. He had stopped in the passage.

"I am here, I am here," answered he.

And coming up to my bed of planks, he again felt my pulse, anxiously bending down to look at me, like a father over the bed of a sick son.

"And now that I recollect, to-morrow is Thursday!" murmured he, "yes, Thursday! too certain."

"And what do you mean by that?"

"That the physician is accustomed to come only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, and unfortunately he will not come to-morrow."

"Do not be uneasy about it."

"Not be uneasy about it? not be uneasy about it? In the whole city nothing is talked of but the arrival of you gentlemen; the physician cannot be ignorant of it. Why the devil has he not made a special effort to come once more?"

"Who knows but he will come to-morrow, although it is Thursday?"

The old man said nothing; but pressed my hand with a grasp powerful enough to lame it; and although he hurt me, he gave me pleasure; like the pleasure which a lover experiences when, in dancing, his beloved happens to step upon his foot: he would willingly scream with pain, but, instead of that, he smiles at her and esteems himself happy.

CHAPTER LXI.

Thursday morning, after a very bad night, debilitated, and my bones bruised by the planks, I was taken with a profuse perspiration. The visit came, the superintendent was not there: as that hour was inconvenient for him, he came somewhat later.

I said to Schiller: "See how soaked I am with sweat; it is already grown cold upon my body; it will be necessary to change my shirt at once."

"It cannot be," he exclaimed, in a brutal voice. But he secretly made a sign to me, with his eyes and his hand. When the corporal and guards went away, he turned round to make me another sign, as he shut the door.

A little after he returned, bringing me one of his own shirts, twice the length of my body.

"It will be rather long for you," said he; "but at present I have no other."

"I thank you, my friend; but as I brought to Spielberg a trunk full of linen, I hope I shall not be refused the use of my own shirts. Have the kindness to go and ask one of the superintendent."

"It is not permitted, sir, to allow you any of your linen. Every Saturday you will be furnished one of the shirts of the establishment, like the other convicts."

"Honest old man," said I, "you see in what a condition I am; it is not probable that I shall ever leave this place alive: I shall never be able to reward you for your kindness."

"For shame, sir, for shame!" he exclaimed. "Talk of reward to a man who cannot render

Digitized by Google

a service, who can scarcely lend in secret something to a sick man to dry his body dripping with sweat!"

And hastily throwing his long shirt upon my back, he went off grumbling, and closed the door with a violent noise.

About two hours after, he brought me a morsel of black bread.

"This," said he, "is the allowance for two days." Then he commenced walking about, and scolding.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "Are you angry with me? I have accepted the shirt you were so kind as to give me."

"I am angry at the doctor, who, although it is Thursday, might have taken the trouble to come."

"Patience!" I replied.

I said patience! but I could not rest in any position upon those planks, without even a pillow: all my bones ached.

At eleven o'clock, a convict, accompanied by Schiller, brought my dinner. It was in two iron pots; one containing some most detestable soup, and the other vegetables, fixed up with such sauce that the odor alone excited disgust.

I tried to swallow a few spoonfuls of soup, but it was impossible.

Schiller kept repeating: "Take courage; try to get accustomed to that food; otherwise it will happen to you as it has already happened to others, to eat only a little bread, and to die afterwards of languor."

Friday morning, Doctor Bayer came at last. He found me with some fever, ordered for me a straw bed, and insisted that I should be taken from my dungeon and transferred to an upper story. It could not be done; there was no place vacant. But a report being made to Count Mitrowski, governor of the two provinces of Moravia and Silesia, residing at Brünn, he replied that, considering the serious nature of my sickness, the order of the physician should be followed.

A little light penetrated into the room they had given me; and by clinging to the bars of the narrow window, I saw the valley below, part of the city of Brünn, a suburb with numerous little gardens, the cemetery, the little lake of Chartruse, and the woody hills which separated us from the famous fields of Austerlitz.

The view enchanted me. Oh! how happy should I have been, if I could have enjoyed it with Maroncelli!

CHAPTER LXII.

In the meantime they were making our prison clothes. I had mine at the end of five days.

They consisted of a pair of pantaloons of coarse cloth, the right side of a grey color, and the left of a dingy brown; a close jacket of two colors, disposed in the same manner; and a waistcoat with the same two colors reversed, that is, the brown on the right side, and the grey on the left. The stockings were of coarse wool; the shirt of tow-cloth, full of shives, real sackcloth. For the neck, a cravat of the same stuff as the shirt. The boots were of uncolored leather, and laced; the hat was white.

To complete this livery, we had irons upon the feet, that is, a chain from one leg to the other, the rings of which were fastened with nails riveted upon an anvil. The workman who performed this operation for me, thinking that I did not understand German, said to one of the guards: "Sick as he is, they might have spared him this sport; two months will not pass before the angel of death will come to deliver him."

"*Mochte es seyn!* Be it so!" said I, slapping him upon the shoulder with my hand.

The poor man started, and was confused; then he added:

"I hope I may not be a prophet, and wish that you may be delivered by a very different angel."

"Rather than live so," I replied, "does it not seem to you that even the angel of death would be welcome?"

He nodded in the affirmative, and went away commiserating my lot.

Digitized by Google

In truth, I would have voluntarily ceased to live, but had no temptation to suicide; I trusted that the weakness of my lungs would be such as to despatch me in a short time. God did not wish it. The fatigue of the journey had done me much harm, but repose brought me some relief.

A minute after the workman went out, I heard the hammer sounding upon the anvil in the underground room. Schiller was still in my chamber.

"Hear those blows," said I; "surely they are putting the irons on poor Maroncelli."

As I uttered these words, my heart was so wrung that I staggered, and should have fallen if the good old man had not supported me. For more than half an hour I was in a state resembling a swoon, yet it was not one. I could not speak; my pulse scarcely beat; a cold sweat inundated me from head to foot; and notwithstanding this, I heard all that Schiller said, and had a most vivid recollection of the past, and perception of the present.

The order of the superintendent and the vigilance of the guards had hitherto preserved silence in all the neighboring prisons. Three or four times I had heard some Italian air sung, which was immediately suppressed by the cries of the sentinels. We had many of the latter stationed upon the terrace under our windows, and one even within our corridor, who went round continually, listening at the doors, and looking through the wickets, to prevent noise.

One day towards evening (every time I think of it I feel anew the palpitations which I then experienced), the sentinels, by a lucky chance, were less attentive, and I heard in the prison adjacent to mine a song struck up and continued in a low but clear voice.

Oh, what joy, what emotion seized upon me! I rose from my bed, listened, and when the voice ceased I involuntarily burst into tears.

"Who art thou, unhappy?" I exclaimed. "Who art thou? Tell me thy name. I am Silvio Pellico."

"Oh, Silvio!" answered my neighbor; "I have no personal acquaintance with you, but I have loved you for a long time. Come close to your window, and let us talk in spite of the watch."

I climbed to the window, when he told me his name, and we exchanged some words of tenderness.

It was Count Antonio Oroboni, a native of Fratta, near Rovigo, a young man of twenty-nine years.

Alas! we were soon interrupted by the menacing shouts of the sentinels. That of the corridor knocked loudly with the butt of his musket, sometimes at my door and sometimes at that of Orobino. We would not, we could not obey; yet the imprecations of the guards were such that we ceased, promising to renew the conversation when the sentinels were changed.

CHAPTER LXIII.

We hoped—what in fact happened—that by speaking more softly, we might still hear each other, and that we might sometimes fall in with compassionate sentinels, who would pretend not to notice our conversation. By dint of experiment we learned to emit a sound so low that it was perceptible to our ears, yet escaped others, or else afforded a pretext for dissembling. It happened, indeed, now and then, that we had listeners of a quicker hearing, or that we forgot to moderate the sound of our voices; then the cries and the knockings upon our doors were renewed, and, what was worse, the anger of poor Schiller and the superintendent.

By degrees we perfected all our measures of precaution, which were, to speak at certain times in preference to others, during the watch of certain guards rather than that of others, and always in a very well moderated voice. Whether it was the perfection of our art, or in others the habit of complaisance which they insensibly acquired, we succeeded in being able to converse enough every day, without affording, scarcely ever, an occasion for a chief to scold us.

We leagued ourselves in a tender friend-

Digitized by Google

ship. He narrated to me the story of his life, and I narrated mine to him. The anguish and consolations of one became the anguish and consolations of the other. Oh, what comfort did we mutually impart! How many times, after a sleepless night, did each of us, going to his window in the morning, and saluting his friend and hearing his dear words, feel the sadness alleviated and courage revived in his heart! Each was conscious of being useful to the other, and this certainty awoke in our thoughts a generous strife of amiability, and that satisfaction which a man experiences, even in misery, when he can render aid to his fellow.

Each conversation left behind it the desire to renew it, and called for further explanations; it was a lively and perpetual stimulus to the understanding, the imagination, the memory, and the heart.

In the commencement, from the recollection of Julian, I distrusted the constancy of this new friend. Hitherto, thought I, no disagreement of opinion has occurred; but some day or other I may displease him in something, and then he will abandon me.

This suspicion soon vanished. Our opinions accorded in all essential points; except that, to a noble soul, burning with generous feelings, and superior to adversity, he added the most entire and candid faith in Christianity, whilst mine had been for some time wavering, and at times it appeared quite extinct.

He combated my doubts with the justest reflections, and in the most affectionate manner. I felt that he was right, and acknowledged it; but my doubts returned. This happens to all those who have not the Gospel in their hearts, to all who hate others, and who are proud of themselves. The mind sees the truth for an instant; but as truth does not please it, it disbelieves it the next instant, and forces itself to look another way. Oroboni had great power in turning my attention to the motives which should influence a man to be indulgent towards his enemies. I could speak to him of nobody that I hated, whom he did not undertake skilfully to defend, not only by words but by examples. Many persons had injured him, he groaned under it, but forgave all, and if he could tell me some laudable trait of any of them, he did it willingly.

The irritation to which I was subject, and which had made me irreligious ever since my condemnation, lasted several weeks; then ceased altogether. The virtue of Oroboni had charmed me. In endeavoring to reach him, I put myself at least upon his footsteps. When I was again able to pray for all men, and no longer hate any one, my doubts in regard to faith disappeared. *Ubi charitas et amor Deus ibi est.* Where love and charity are, there is God.

CHAPTER LXIV.

To tell the truth, if our punishment was very severe and calculated to irritate, we had at the same time the rare good fortune of seeing only good people around us. They could alleviate our lot only by kind and respectful attentions; but these were rendered by all. If there was some roughness in old Schiller, how fully was it compensated by the nobleness of his heart! Even the wretched Kunda (the convict who brought us our dinner, and also water three times a day) wished to testify his compassion for us. He swept our rooms twice a week. One morning while sweeping, he seized the moment when Schiller was two or three steps from the door, to offer me a piece of white bread. I did not accept it, but cordially pressed his hand. This pressure moved him: he said to me in bad German (he was a Pole): "they give you so little to eat, sir, that surely you must suffer from hunger."

I assured him to the contrary, but that assurance was incredible.

The physician, seeing that none of us could eat the quality of food afforded us during the first days, put us upon what was called *quarter rations*, that is, the regimen of the hospital. It consisted of three small dishes of very thin soup per day, a little bit of roast lamb that

Digitized by Google

might be swallowed at a mouthful, and perhaps three ounces of white bread. As my health grew stronger, my appetite increased, and that *quarter* was really too little. I tried to come back to the diet of those in health, but nothing was to be gained; it disgusted me to such a degree that I could not eat it. I was absolutely obliged to confine myself to the *quarter*. For more than a year I knew what was the torment of hunger. And that torment was suffered in even greater violence by some of my companions, who, more robust than myself, were accustomed to more liberal nourishment. I know from some of them that they accepted bread from Schiller and the two guards attached to our service, and even from that good fellow Kunda.

"They say in the city, that these gentlemen get very little to eat," said the barber to me one day, a young man, the apprentice of our surgeon.

"It is too true," said I frankly.

On the following Saturday (he came every Saturday) he wanted to give me, in secret, quite a large loaf of white bread. Schiller feigned not to notice this offer. If I had listened to my stomach I should have accepted it, but I was firm in my refusal, that the poor youth might not be tempted to repeat his present, which might at length be charged upon him.

For the same reasons I refused the offers of Schiller. Many a time has he brought me a piece of boiled meat, and begged me to eat it, protesting that it cost him nothing; that it was the remains of his dinner, that he did not know what to do with it, that he should give it to some of the others if I did not take it. I would have willingly fallen upon and devoured it; but if I did so, would not Schiller want to give me something every day?

Twice only did I yield; once when he brought me a plate of cherries, and another time some pears; the sight of these fruits irresistibly fascinated me. I was sorry I accepted them, merely because he afterwards did not cease to offer them.

CHAPTER LXV.

It had been established from the first that each of us should have an hour to walk, twice a week. Afterwards this relief was granted every other day, and still later, every day, except festivals.

Each one was taken to walk separately, between two guards, with muskets on their shoulders. Having my lodging at the head of the passage I passed, in my way out, the rooms of all the Italian prisoners of state, except that of Maroncelli, who alone languished below.

"Pleasant walk!" they all murmured through the wickets of their doors, but I was not permitted to stop to salute any one.

We descended a stairway, crossed a large court, and came upon a terrace lying to the south, whence could be seen the city of Brünn, and a great extent of the surrounding country.

In the court above mentioned were always many convicts of the common sort, who went to and from their labors or promenaded in groups conversing. Among them were many Italian thieves who saluted me with much respect, and said among themselves: "He is not such a rascal as we are, yet his captivity is much more severe than ours."

They enjoyed in fact much more freedom than I did. I heard these and many other expressions, and cordially saluted them in return.

On one occasion one of them said to me: "Your salutation does me good. You can perhaps discover something in my countenance that is not villainy. An unhappy passion led me to commit a crime; but, no, Signor, I am not a villain!"

He burst into tears. I stretched out my hand to him, but he could not press it. The guards repulsed him, not from ill-nature, but in obedience to their orders. They were to let no one approach me, whoever he might be. The remarks which the convicts addressed to me they generally pretended to speak among themselves, and if my two guards perceived that they were intended for my ear, they imposed silence.

Persons of various conditions, who were

Digitized by Google

strangers at the castle, also passed through this court, coming to visit the superintendent, the chaplain, the sergeant, or one of the corporals. "There's one of the Italians," said they in a low voice, and stopped to look at me; and many times I heard them say in German, thinking I did not understand it: "That poor gentleman will never reach old age; he has death in his countenance."

In truth, though my health had been at first much improved, I languished for lack of nourishment, and again was frequently attacked by fever. With difficulty I dragged my chain as far as the place of our promenade; and when there, I threw myself upon the grass, where I generally remained until my hour was expired.

My guards remained standing, or sat down by me to talk. One of them, named Kral, was a Bohemian, who, though belonging to a family of poor peasants, had received a certain degree of education, and had improved himself as much as he was able by reflecting with much discrimination upon the things of the world, and by reading all the books that he could lay his hands upon. He was acquainted with Klopstock, Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, and many other good German authors. He knew a great many extracts from them by heart, and recited them with intelligence and feeling. The other guard was a Pole, of the name of Kubitzky, ignorant, but respectful and cordial. Their company was dear to me.

CHAPTER LXVI.

At one of the extremities of the terrace were the apartments of the superintendent; at the other, lived a corporal with his wife and young child. When I saw any one coming out of these dwellings I arose and advanced to meet the person or persons who came forth, by whom I was loaded with marks of courtesy and compassion.

The superintendent's wife had been sick for a long time and was dying slowly. Sometimes, at her request, she was brought out into the open air upon a sofa. I am unable to describe how deeply affected she was in expressing to me the compassion she felt for us all. Her look was singularly sweet and timid, nevertheless it was from time to time fixed with an intense, inquiring confidence, upon the eyes of him who spoke to her.

I said to her one day with a smile: "Do you know, madam, that you somewhat resemble a person once dear to me?"

She blushed, and replied with a serious and amiable simplicity: "Do not forget me then when I am dead; pray for my poor soul, and for the little children I leave on the earth."

From that day she was unable to leave her bed, and I never saw her more. After languishing several months she died.

She had three sons, pretty as little loves, and another one at the breast. Often the unfortunate lady had embraced them in my presence, and said, "Who knows who will be their mother after I am gone? Whoever she may be, may the Lord give her the bowels of a mother, even for children not her own!" And she wept.

A thousand times have I recalled her prayer and her tears.

When she was no more, I sometimes embraced those children, and, with tender emotion, repeated that maternal prayer. And I thought of my own mother, of the ardent wishes her affectionate heart was doubtless forming for me, and with sobs I exclaimed: "Oh happier far is that mother, who, in dying, left her children infants, than she who, after rearing them with infinite care, sees them dragged away from her."

Two excellent women of advanced age customarily attended the children: one of whom was the mother of the superintendent, and the other his aunt. They desired to know all my history, and I briefly related it to them.

"How unhappy we are," said they with an expression of the most sincere sorrow, "that we are unable to afford you any relief! But be assured that we will pray for you, and if one day your pardon comes, it will be a festival for all our family."

Digitized by Google

The former, whom I saw most frequently, possessed a sweet and admirable eloquence, in imparting consolation. I listened to it with filial gratitude, and her words were engraved upon my heart.

She spoke things that I knew already, yet they struck me as if they had been new: "That misfortune does not degrade a man unless he is a coward, but rather elevates him; that if we could penetrate the counsels of God, we should find conquerors much more to be pitied than the conquered, the gay than the afflicted, the rich than the poor, despoiled of their all;—that the special regard testified by the Son of God for the unfortunate is an important lesson;—that we ought to glory in the cross, since it has been borne by divine shoulders."

Alas! these two good old ladies that I saw with so much pleasure, were soon obliged, for family reasons, to leave Spielberg; the children also ceased to appear upon the terrace. How much these losses afflicted me!

CHAPTER LXVII.

The uneasiness caused by the chain upon my feet, by depriving me of sleep, contributed to ruin my health. Schiller wished me to complain, and pretended that it was the physician's duty to cause it to be taken off.

I did not listen to him for some time, but at length I yielded to his counsel, and told the physician that, to recover the benefit of sleep, I begged him to remove my chain, at least for a few days.

The physician replied, that my fever had not reached such a point as to justify him in complying with my request, and that I must accustom myself to irons.

The reply offended me, and I was vexed at having made a useless request.

"See what I have gained by following your obstinate advice," said I to Schiller.

I must have spoken these words quite sharply, for the rude, yet good old man, took offence at them.

"You are vexed at having exposed yourself to a refusal," he said, "and I am hurt that you take a proud tone towards me."

Then he proceeded to preach me a long sermon: "The proud make their importance consist in not exposing themselves to a refusal, in not accepting offers, in blushing at a thousand follies. *Alle eseleyen!* (All nonsense) Vain greatness! Ignorance of true dignity! True dignity consists mostly in feeling ashamed only of bad actions!"

He spoke, and went away, making an infernal clatter with his keys.

I remained confounded. "And yet," said I, "this blunt sincerity pleases me. It comes from the heart like his offers, like his advice, like his sympathy. And has he not told me the truth? To how many weaknesses do I not give the name of dignity, when, in fact, they are nothing but pride?

At the hour of dinner, Schiller let the convict Kunda bring in the small pots and the water while he stopped at the door. I called him.

"I have not time," answered he dryly.

I left my bed, went to him and said: "If you wish my dinner to do me any good, do not make me such an ugly face."

"What face must I make?" said he, clearing up.

"That of a cheerful man, of a friend," I replied.

"Hurra for joy!" he exclaimed. "And if you want to see me dance, that your dinner may do you good, I am at your service." And he began to gambol so comically with his long thin legs, that I burst into a laugh. I laughed, yet my heart was deeply touched.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

One evening, that Oroboni and myself were standing at our windows, condoling with each other, and saying how hungry we were, we elevated our voices a little, and the sentinels screamed at us. The superintendent, who,

Digitized by Google

unluckily, was passing that way, considered it his duty to send for Schiller and reprimand him severely because he was not more watchful to make us keep silence. Schiller came in great wrath to complain to me, and enjoined me not to speak any more from my window. He wanted me to promise him.

"No," I replied, "I will not promise."

"Oh, *der teufel! der teufel!*" he exclaimed, "to say to me, 'I will not!' to me who have just received this cursed reprimand on your account!"

"I am sorry, my dear Schiller, for the reprimand you have received, I am really sorry; but I do not like to promise what I feel I shall not perform."

"And why not perform it?"

"Because I cannot; because perpetual solitude is for me so cruel a torment, that I shall never resist the necessity of letting some words escape from my breast, and inviting my neighbor to answer me. And if my neighbor should remain silent, I would address my words to the bars of my window, to the hills before me, to the birds that fly in the air."

"*Der teufel!* and you will not promise?"

"No, no, no!" I exclaimed.

He threw down his clattering bunch of keys and repeated, "*der teufel! der teufel!*" then, embracing me, he exclaimed: "Must I cease to be a man on account of those vile keys? You are a man of the right sort, and I am glad that you are not willing to make a promise that you will not keep. I would do the same."

I picked up his keys and gave them to him.

"These keys," said I, "are not so *vile*, since they cannot turn an honest corporal like you, into an unfeeling *sbirro*."

"If I thought they could do it," he answered, "I would carry them to my superiors and tell them: 'If you are willing to give me no bread but that of the executioner, I will go and beg.'"

He drew his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his eyes, then elevated them, joining his hands in the attitude of prayer. I clasped my own likewise, and offered a prayer in silence. He comprehended that I prayed for him, and I knew that he did the same for me.

In going out, he said to me in a low voice: "When you talk with Count Oroboni, speak as low as possible. You will do two good things at the same time: spare me the reprimands of the superintendent, and prevent the overhearing some remarks, perhaps —— shall I say it? remarks, which, if reported, would irritate still more him who can punish."

I assured him that no word should ever escape our lips, which could offend, no matter to whom it were reported.

We had, in fact, no need of advice to be on our guard. Two prisoners who effect a communication with each other, know very well how to invent a jargon in which they speak everything, without being understood by any listener whatever.

CHAPTER LXIX.

I RETURNED from my walk one morning; it was the seventh of August. The door of Oroboni's room was open, and Schiller, who was within, did not hear me coming. My guards wished to advance a step to shut the door, but I anticipated them, threw myself forward, and found myself in the arms of Oroboni.

Schiller was confounded: "*Der teufel, der teufel!*" he exclaimed, and raised his finger to threaten me. But his eyes filled with tears, and he said, sobbing: "O my God, take pity upon these poor young men, and me, and all the unhappy, thou who wast so unhappy upon earth!"

The two guards wept. The sentinel of the corridor ran thither and wept also. Oroboni said to me: "Silvio, Silvio, this day is one of the happiest of my life!" I know not what I said in reply; I was beside myself with joy and tenderness.

When Schiller conjured us to separate, and we were obliged to obey him, Oroboni, bursting into a flood of tears, said to me: "Shall we ever meet again in this world?"

Digitized by Google

And I never saw him again! A few months afterwards his room was vacant, and Oroboni reposed in the cemetery that stretched before my window!

Since our interview of a moment, it appeared that our friendship was still more tender, more ardent than before; that we had become more necessary to each other.

Oroboni was an elegant young man, of a noble exterior, but pale and in wretched health. His eyes alone were full of life. My affection for him was increased by the pity with which his leanness and paleness inspired me. He had the same feeling for me. We both saw how probable it was, that one of us would soon be the unhappy survivor of the other.

A few days after, he was taken sick. I did nothing but groan and pray for him. After many returns of fever, he recovered a little strength, and was able to return to our sweet conversations. Oh, how consoling it was to me, to hear again the sound of his voice.

"Do not deceive yourself," said he to me. "It will last but a short time. Have the strength to prepare yourself for my loss; inspire me with courage by your own."

Just at this time they wanted to give a coating of white to the walls of our prisons, and in the meantime we had to go into subterranean cells. Unluckily, we were not put in contiguous rooms. Schiller told me that Oroboni was well, but I suspected he did not like to tell me the truth, and feared that his health, already so feeble, would become worse by confinement in a dungeon.

Would that I had had, at least, the good fortune on that occasion to be near my dear Maroncelli! I, however, heard his voice. We saluted each other in singing, in spite of the cries of the guards.

At this time the first physician of Brünn came to visit us, probably sent in consequence of reports which the superintendent had forwarded to Vienna, upon the extreme feebleness to which so great a scarcity of food had reduced us all, or because an epidemic scurvy prevailed in the prisons at that time.

Ignorant of the cause of this visit, I imagined it was on account of a new complaint of Oroboni. The fear of losing him gave me inexpressible uneasiness. I was then seized with a profound melancholy and the desire to die. The idea of suicide returned. I combated it; but I was like an exhausted traveller, who, while saying to himself, "It is my duty to go on to the end," feels an irresistible desire to throw himself on the ground and rest.

I had been told, that recently, in one of those dark dens, an old Bohemian had put an end to his life by dashing his head against the wall. I could not chase from my mind the temptation to imitate him. I do not know but my delirium would have come to that, if a hemorrhage of blood from the breast had not made me believe that my death was near. I thanked God that it was his will to take me away in that manner, sparing me an act of despair which my reason condemned.

But God, on the contrary, wished to preserve me. That spitting of blood alleviated my troubles. In the meantime I was removed to my room above, where the clear light and the regained neighborhood of Oroboni re-attached me to life.

CHAPTER LXX.

I CONFIDED to him the dreadful melancholy that I had experienced when separated from him; and he told me that he, likewise, had been obliged to combat the thought of suicide.

"Let us take advantage," said he, "of the little time again afforded us, to strengthen each other with the consolations of religion. Let us speak of God: let us incite one another to love him; let us remember that he is justice, wisdom, goodness, beauty, that he is everything that we admire of highest excellence. I tell you in truth, that death is not far from me. I shall be eternally grateful to you, if you contribute to make me as pious in my last days, as I ought to have been all my life."

Digitized by Google

And henceforth our conversations dwelt only upon Christian philosophy, and the contrast it offers to the poverty of the doctrine of the sensualist. We both rejoiced in discovering so great a conformity between Christianity and reason; both, in comparing the various evangelical communions, saw that the Catholic only could truly stand the test of criticism, and that its doctrine was composed of the purest principles and the soundest morals, and not of the miserable conceptions of human ignorance.

"And if, by some chance little to be expected, we should return into society," said Oroboni, "should we be so cowardly as not to confess our belief in the Gospel? As to take umbrage, if any one imagines that a prison has enfeebled our minds, and that by that weakness we had become less firm in the faith?

"My dear Oroboni," I replied, "your question reveals your answer, which is also mine. The height of cowardice is to be the slave of the opinions of others, when we are persuaded that they are false. I do not believe that either you or myself could ever be guilty of such cowardice."

Among these outpourings of the heart I committed a fault I had sworn to Julian that I would never, by revealing his real name, confide to any one the relations that had existed between us. I imparted them to Oroboni, saying to him: "In the world, a thing of this sort should never escape my lips, but here we are in a tomb, and even if you should ever leave it, I know that I can trust you."

That most honorable soul was silent.

"Why do you not answer me?" I asked.

At length he began to censure me for having betrayed the secret. His reproof was just. No friendship, however intimate it may be, and however fortified by virtue, can justify such a violation of confidence.

But since my fault was committed, Oroboni derived from it some good for me. He had been acquainted with Julian, and he knew many honorable acts of his life. He related them to me, and said: "This man has so often acted like a Christian, that he cannot carry his anti-religious fury to the grave. Let us hope so. And you, Silvio, take care to forgive his ill-humor from your heart and pray for him."

These words were sacred for me.

CHAPTER LXXI.

The conversations of which I speak, sometimes with Oroboni, and sometimes with Schiller or others, occupied, after all, but a small portion of the long twenty-four hours of my day, and very often it happened that all conversation with the former was impossible.

What did I do in so great a solitude?

My time, during those days, passed in the following manner: I rose always at day-break, and jumping on the head of my bed, I climbed upon the bars of my window and performed my devotions. Oroboni was already at his window, or was not slow in coming. After a mutual salutation, each continued to raise his thoughts to God in silence. Horrible as were our prisons, so much more beautiful was the spectacle spread out before us. That heaven, that landscape, the far-off moving of living creatures in the valley, the voices of the young villagers, the laugh, the song, exhilarated us, and made us feel more dearly the presence of Him, who is so magnificent in his goodness, and whose aid was so needful to us.

Then came the morning visit of the guards. They threw a glance around the room, to see that all was in order, and examined my chain ring by ring, to assure themselves that it had not been broken by accident or design; or rather (for to break it was impossible) they made this inspection, to obey faithfully the rules of discipline. If it was the day for the doctor's visit, Schiller asked if I wished to speak to him, and made a memorandum of it.

The tour of our prisons being finished, Schiller returned, accompanied by Kunda, whose duty it was to clean our rooms.

Digitized by Google

After a brief interval, they brought us our breakfast. It consisted of half a pot of a reddish broth, with three very thin slices of bread. I ate the bread, but the broth I could not swallow.

Then I disposed myself to study. Maroncelli had brought many books from Italy, and all our companions likewise had brought more or less. They formed, altogether, an excellent little library. We hoped, moreover, to be able, by means of our money, to increase it. We had asked permission of the Emperor to read our books and purchase new ones; no answer had yet been received; but, in the mean while, the governor of Brünn granted us, provisionally, the privilege of having each two books at a time, and of changing them as often as we wished. At nine o'clock, the superintendent came, and if the physician was wanted, he accompanied him.

After this, another space of time remained for study, till eleven, which was the hour for dinner.

There was no other visit till sunset, and I resumed my studies. At that time, Schiller and Kunda came to change the water, and an instant after, the superintendent appeared with some guards, to make the evening inspection, which extended to every part of my room and my irons.

For one hour per day, either before or after dinner, according to the pleasure of the guards, we took our walk.

After the visit of the evening, just mentioned, Oroboni and I disposed ourselves to talk, and these were usually our longest conversations. They sometimes occurred in the morning, or immediately after dinner, but the latter were for the most part very short.

Sometimes the sentinels were compassionate enough to say to us; "A little lower, gentlemen; otherwise the punishment will fall on us."

At other times, they feigned not to notice that we were talking; then, seeing the sergeant coming, they begged us to keep still until he had passed, which he had scarcely done, when they said to us: "You can go on now, gentlemen, but as low as possible."

Some of the soldiers would now and then have the boldness to take part in the conversation, to satisfy our inquiries, and give us some news from Italy.

To certain remarks, we made no reply, except to beg them to be silent. It was natural for us to doubt whether their words were always the expressions of sincere hearts, or an artifice to pry into our minds. Nevertheless, I am rather inclined to believe that they spoke with sincerity.

CHAPTER LXXII.

One evening, we had very indulgent sentinels, when Oroboni and myself did not take the trouble to moderate our voices; Maroncelli, having climbed upon the window of his subterranean cell, heard us and distinguished my voice. He was not able to contain himself, but saluted me in singing. He inquired how I was, and expressed, in the tenderest terms, his regret at not having been able to obtain permission for us to room together. I had also requested this favor, but neither the superintendent of Spielberg nor the governor of Brünn had the power to grant it. Our mutual desire had been transmitted to the Emperor, and no answer had, up to that time, been received.

Besides the time that we had saluted each other in singing, in the rooms below, I had many times heard his songs in the upper story, but without distinguishing the words; and then, only a few moments, because he was not allowed to proceed.

Now he elevated his voice to a much higher tone, and not being so soon interrupted, I understood all. No language can express the emotions that I then experienced.

I answered him, and we continued our dialogue about a quarter of an hour. At length, the sentinels upon the terrace were changed, and the new comers were not so complaisant. We attempted to resume our singing, but they assailed us with furious cries and curses, and we were obliged to respect them.

Digitized by Google

I pictured Maroncelli to myself, lying for so long a time in a cell much worse than mine; I imagined the sadness into which he must often fall; the injury which his health must suffer; and a profound anguish overcame me.

At length, I was able to weep; but tears brought me no relief. I was taken with a severe head-ache and a violent fever. Unable any longer to stand, I threw myself on my bed. The convulsions increased; my breast was racked with pains and horrible spasms: I thought that night would be my last.

On the day following, the fever had ceased, and my breast was better; but my brain seemed to be on fire, and I could scarcely turn my head, without awakening cruel pains.

I communicated my state to Oroboni. He also felt much worse than usual.

"My friend," said he, "the day is not far distant, when one of us will no longer be able to come to the window. Each time that we salute each other may be the last. Let us both hold ourselves ready, either to die, or to survive a friend."

His voice was agitated; I could not reply. We were silent for a moment, then he resumed:

"How happy you are to know German! You can at least enjoy the privilege of confession. I have asked for a priest who knew Italian; I was told there was none. But God sees my desire, and in truth, since I confessed at Venice, I seem to have nothing that weighs upon my conscience."

"I, on the contrary," I replied, "confessed at Venice, with my mind full of rancor, and did worse than if I had refused the sacraments. But if I am now allowed a priest, I assure you I will confess from my heart and forgive the whole world."

"Heaven bless you!" he exclaimed; "you give me great consolation. Let us do, yes, let us both do what is in our power to be eternally united in happiness, as we have been in these days of misfortune."

The next day, I awaited him at the window, but he came not. I learned from Schiller that he was seriously ill.

Eight or ten days after, he was better and came again to salute me. I was suffering, but still able to support myself. Many months were thus passed by him, as well as myself, in these alternations of better and worse.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

I WAS able to drag myself about until the eleventh of January, 1823. I rose in the morning with a slight head-ache, and a disposition to faint. My legs trembled, and my respiration was difficult.

Oroboni had also been sick for two or three days, and had not risen.

My soup was brought, of which I had scarcely tasted a spoonful, when I fell, deprived of sensation. Some time after, the sentinel of the corridor looked, by chance, through the wicket, and seeing me lying prostrate on the ground, and the pot overturned near me, he thought I was dead, and called Schiller.

The superintendent came also; the physician was immediately summoned, and I was put in bed. It was with difficulty I regained my consciousness.

The physician said that my life was in danger, and had my irons taken off. He prescribed for me some cordial, I know not what, but my stomach could retain nothing. The pain in my head increased terribly.

The governor was immediately informed of my illness, and he despatched a courier to Vienna, to know how I was to be treated. The reply was, not to place me in the infirmary, but to serve me in prison with the same care as if I were in the infirmary. Moreover, the superintendent was authorized to furnish me soup and broth from his kitchen, as long as the severity of my sickness continued.

This last provision was at first useless; no food or drink could be taken. My condition grew worse for a whole week, and I was in a raving delirium day and night.

Digitized by Google

Kral and Kubitzky were given me for attendants; both of whom served me with affection.

Every time that I came somewhat to my senses, Kral repeated to me: "Put your trust in God; God alone is good."

"Pray for me," said I, "not that he may restore me to health, but that he may accept my sufferings and my death in expiation of my sins."

He suggested that I should request the sacraments.

"If I have not requested them," I replied, "attribute it to the weakness of my head; but it will be a great consolation to me to receive them."

Kral reported my words to the superintendent, who sent the chaplain of the prison to me.

I confessed, received the communion, and then extreme unction. I was much pleased with this priest. His name was Sturm. The reflections he made upon the justice of God, the injustice of men, the duty of forgiveness, and the vanity of all worldly things, were by no means common-place. They bore the impress of a noble and cultivated understanding, and of a warm feeling of real love towards God and our neighbor.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

The effort of attention that I made, in order to receive the sacraments, seemed to exhaust my remaining strength; but, instead of that, it was beneficial, by throwing me into a lethargy of many hours, which gave me rest.

I awoke a little relieved, and seeing Schiller and Kral near me, I took their hands, and thanked them for their care.

Schiller said to me, "My eye is used to seeing the sick; I would bet that you will not die."

"And do you not think," said I, "that you are making for me a sad prediction?"

"No," he replied; "the miseries of life are great, it is true; but he who supports them with nobleness of soul, and with humility, always gains by living."

Afterwards, he added: "If you live, I hope you will, within a few days, have a great consolation. You have requested to see Signor Maroncelli?"

"I have begged it so many times in vain, that I no longer dare to hope for it?"

"Hope, hope, signor, and renew your request."

I renewed it, in fact, the same day. The superintendent likewise bade me hope, and added, that not only was it likely that Maroncelli could see me, but that he might even be given me as an attendant, and henceforth remain my inseparable companion.

As all the prisoners of state had their health more or less broken, the governor had asked permission from Vienna to put us two and two, so that one could be a support to the other.

I had also begged the favor of writing a last adieu to my family.

Towards the end of the second week a crisis occurred in my malady, and the danger disappeared.

I was beginning to get up, when, one morning, my door opened, and I saw the superintendent, Schiller and the doctor enter in high spirits. The first ran up to me, and said: "We have permission to give you Maroncelli for a companion, and to let you write a letter to your relations."

Joy took away my breath, and the poor superintendent, who, in the impetuosity of a good heart, had failed in prudence, believed me lost.

When I recovered my senses, and recollected the announcement I had heard, I begged them not to defer so great a blessing to me. The physician consented, and Maroncelli was conducted to my arms.

Oh, what a moment was that! "You are yet alive!" we both exclaimed. "Oh, my friend! Oh, my brother! What a happy day we are again permitted to see! God be praised for it!"

But to our joy, boundless as it was, there was joined a boundless compassion. Maron-

Digitized by Google

celli must have been less struck at finding me so broken: he knew what a severe illness I had just passed through. But I, even while thinking of what he must have suffered, had not imagined him so changed from what he was. I scarcely recognized him. That countenance, formerly so handsome, so blooming, was wasted with suffering, with hunger, and the bad air of his gloomy dungeon.

It was, nevertheless, a great comfort to see, to hear each other, and to be, at last, inseparably united. Oh, how many things we had to communicate, to recall, to repeat to one another! What sweetness in weeping together! What harmony in all our ideas! What satisfaction to find ourselves agreeing on the subject of religion; both hating ignorance and barbarity, yet hating no man, pitying the ignorant and cruel, and praying for them!

CHAPTER LXXV.

A SHEET of paper and an inkstand were brought to me, that I might write to my friends.

As the permission had, strictly speaking, been given to a dying man, who wished to send his last farewell to his family, I feared that my letter would not be despatched if it contained anything else. I confined myself to entreating my parents, my brothers and sisters, with the most tender earnestness, to resign themselves to my lot, protesting to them that I was myself resigned to it.

This letter was, nevertheless, sent, as I afterwards learned, when, after so many years, I revisited the paternal roof. It was the only one which my beloved parents were able to receive from me during the long period of my imprisonment. I never received any from them; those which they wrote to me were always stopped at Vienna. My companions in misfortune were likewise deprived of intercourse with their families.

We many times requested the favor of having at least paper and ink to pursue our studies, and of employing our money to purchase books. We were never listened to.

The governor, nevertheless, continued to let us read our books.

We were indebted to his kindness also for some improvement in our diet; but, alas! it did not last long. He had consented that our food, instead of being prepared in the kitchen of the steward of the prisons, should be furnished from that of the superintendent. Some additional funds had been set apart by him for that purpose. These arrangements were not confirmed; but, as long as the favor lasted, I experienced great relief from it. Maroncelli also recovered a little strength. For the unfortunate Oroboni, it was too late!

The latter had had, at first, Solera, the advocate, for a companion, and afterwards the priest D. Fortini.

When we were placed two and two in all the cells, the prohibition to speak from our windows was renewed, accompanied with the menace, that whoever dared to infringe it, should be again consigned to solitude. To tell the truth, we violated the prohibition sometimes by saluting each other; but we never had any long conversations.

The disposition of Maroncelli was in perfect harmony with my own. The courage of one sustained that of the other. If one of us fell into a fit of despondency, or of anger against the rigors of our situation, the other cheered him by some pleasantry or seasonable reflections. A sweet smile almost always soothed our troubles.

As long as we had books, although we had read them so often that we knew them by heart, they formed a sweet pasture for the mind, as they were ever the subject of new examinations, new comparisons, new judgments, and new corrections. We read or meditated a great part of the day in silence, and devoted the time of dinner, that of the promenade, and all the evening, to conversation.

Maroncelli, in his dungeon, had composed many verses of great beauty. He recited them to me, and composed others. I composed some likewise, and recited them to

Digitized by Google

him, and our memory was exercised to retain all. Wonderful was the facility which we acquired, of composing long poems by heart, of polishing and repolishing them a great number of times, and of bringing them to the same degree of possible perfection that we could have done by writing them. In this manner, Maroncelli composed, little by little, and retained in memory many thousand verses, lyrical and epic. I composed the tragedy of *Leoniero da Dertona*, and various other things.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

Oroboni, after having suffered much during the winter and spring, became in summer still worse. He spit blood, and was affected with dropsy.

I leave it to be imagined what was our affliction, when he was dying so near us, without our being able to break through that cruel wall which prevented us from seeing him, and giving him our friendly attentions!

Schiller brought us news of him. The unfortunate young man suffered dreadfully; but never lost his courage. He received spiritual aid from the chaplain, who, fortunately, knew French.

He died on the 13th of June, 1823. Some hours before he expired, he spoke of his father, now eighty years old, was deeply affected, and wept. Afterwards he resumed, saying: "But why do I weep for the most fortunate of my friends, since he is on the eve of rejoining me in the abodes of eternal peace?"

His last words were: "I forgive my enemies from my heart."

D. Fortini closed his eyes; he had been his friend from childhood, and was a man wholly devoted to religion and charity.

Poor Oroboni! What icy coldness ran through our veins when we were told he was no more! And heard the voices and steps of those who came to take away his corpse! And saw from our window the cart that bore it to the grave-yard! The cart was drawn by two common convicts; four guards followed it. We accompanied the sad convoy with our eyes as far as the cemetery. It entered the enclosure, and stopped in one corner: there was the grave!

A few minutes after, the cart, the convicts, and guards returned: one of the latter was Kubitsky. He said to me (a noble thought, surprising in so coarse a man): "I have marked with precision the place of burial, in order that, if any relative or friend should one day obtain permission to take up the bones and carry them to his own country, it may be known where they lie."

How many times Oroboni had said to me, looking at the cemetery from his window: "I must habituate myself to the idea of going to rot yonder; yet I confess that that idea makes me shudder. It seems to me that one is not so well off buried in this country, as in our own dear peninsula."

Then he laughed, and said: "Childish notions! When a garment is worn out, and has to be laid aside, what matters it where it is thrown?"

At other times, he used to say: "I am preparing for death; but I should resign myself to it more willingly, on one condition: to enter, for a moment, under the paternal roof; to embrace the knees of my father; to hear one word of benediction, and to die!"

He sighed, and added: "If this cup cannot pass from me, O my God, thy will be done!"

The last morning of his life, he still said, kissing a crucifix that Kral presented to him: "Thou who wast a God, hadst nevertheless a horror of death, and saidst: *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!* Pardon me if I say it also. But I repeat, too, thine other words: '*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*'"

CHAPTER LXXVII.

After the death of Oroboni, I again fell sick. I believed I should soon go to rejoin my deceased friend; and I desired it. Yet could

Digitized by Google

I have separated from Maroncelli without regret?

Many a time, whilst he, seated upon his bed, read or composed verses, or, perhaps, feigned, like myself, to be occupied with such studies, yet was meditating upon our misfortunes, I looked at him sorrowfully, and said to myself: "How much more sad will be thy life when the breath of death shall have touched me; when thou shalt see me borne away from this chamber; when, gazing at the cemetery, thou shalt say; 'Silvio, too, is there!'" I was touched at the lot of the wretched survivor; and put up prayers that they might give him another companion, capable of appreciating him as I did, or that the Lord would prolong my torments, and leave me the sweet office of soothing those of this unfortunate, by sharing them.

I mention not how many times my maladies went and returned. The assistance that Maroncelli rendered me during their continuance was that of a most tender brother. He perceived when I did not care to talk, and then he kept silence; he saw when his words might administer solace, and then always found subjects suited to my frame of mind, sometimes cherishing it, and sometimes aiming, by degrees, to divert me from it. A more noble soul than his, I have never known; equal to his, very few. A great love of justice, great toleration, great confidence in human virtue and in the aids of Providence, a most lively sense of the beautiful in all the arts, an imagination rich in poetry, all the most amiable endowments of mind and heart, united to render him dear to me.

I did not forget Oroboni; each day I lamented his death; but often my heart rejoiced in the reflection that this beloved friend, freed from every evil, and happy in the bosom of his God, must rank in the number of his joys, that of seeing me with a friend no less affectionate than he.

A voice within my soul seemed to assure me that Oroboni was no longer in a state of expiation; nevertheless, I ceased not to pray for him. Many times I dreamed of seeing him, and thought he prayed for me; and I liked to persuade myself that those dreams were not the effect of chance, but real manifestations of him, which God permitted for the purpose of consoling me. I would appear ridiculous were I to describe the vividness of those dreams, and the real satisfaction they left me for whole days.

But my religious feelings, and my friendship for Maroncelli, alleviated more and more my afflictions. The only idea that terrified me, was the possibility that this unfortunate, with his health already so broken, though less threatening than mine, would precede me to the tomb. Every time that he was sick, I trembled; every time I saw him grow better, was a holiday for me.

The fear of losing him gave to my affection an ever-increasing strength; and the fear of losing me produced the same effect upon him. Ah! there is a great charm in that alternation of fear and hope for the only person that remains to us! Our lot was surely one of the most miserable to be found on earth, and yet our boundless esteem and love for each other formed a species of happiness, even in the midst of our sufferings, that we truly felt.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

I SHOULD have desired that the chaplain, with whom I had been so much pleased at the time of my first illness, could be given us for a confessor, and that we could see him from time to time, without being seriously ill. But instead of giving this charge to him, the governor assigned to us an Augustine monk, named Father Baptista, until his nomination should be confirmed at Vienna, or another one appointed.

I feared to lose by the change; I was mistaken. Father Baptista was an angel of charity; his manners were courteous, and even elegant; he reasoned profoundly upon the duties of man.

We prayed him to visit us often. He came once a month, and oftener if he was able.

Digitized by Google

He brought us also some books, with the permission of the governor, and told us, in the name of his abbot, that the whole library of the convent was at our disposal. This would have been a great benefit to us if it had lasted. We profited by it, however, for several months.

After confession, he stopped a long time to converse with us, and his whole discourse showed a mind upright, dignified, passionately devoted to the greatness and holiness of man. We had the good fortune to enjoy his light and his friendship about a year, and he never belied himself. Never did a syllable make us suspect an intention of serving politics instead of his ministry; never did he fail of the most delicate attentions.

At first, to speak the truth, I distrusted him; I expected to see him employ the acuteness of his mind in unsuitable inquiries. Such distrust is but too natural in a prisoner of state; but what a relief we experience when it subsides; when we discover in the interpreter of God, no other zeal than that for the cause of God and humanity!

Father Baptista had a manner of administering consolation peculiar to himself, and very efficacious. I accused myself, for example, of transports of rage on account of the rigors of our prison discipline. He moralized a little on the virtue of suffering with calmness, and with a forgiving spirit; then, in the most vivid colors, he painted the miseries of conditions other than his own. He had lived much in town and country, had known the great and little, and meditated upon human injustice; he knew how to describe, to the life, the passions and habits of the various classes of society. Everywhere he showed me the powerful and the weak, oppressors and oppressed; everywhere the necessity of either hating our fellows, or of loving them with a generous indulgence and compassion. The instances that he related to remind me of the universality of unhappiness, and the good effects to be derived from it, had nothing singular, they were even quite common; but he told them in such concise and forcible language, that I could not but feel strongly the conclusions to be drawn from them.

Ah, yes! every time I heard those tender reproofs and noble counsels, I burned with the love of virtue; I no longer hated any one; I would have given my life for the meanest of my species; I blessed God for having made me a man.

Unhappy he, who knows not the sublimity of confession! Unhappy he, who, not to appear vulgar, thinks himself obliged to turn it into derision! Since every one knows that he ought to be good, it is not true that no benefit is gained from hearing it repeated, that our own reflections and suitable reading are sufficient. No! the living speech of a man has a power which neither reading nor reflection can have. The soul is more moved by it; the impressions it makes are deeper. In the language of a brother, there is a life and a suitableness which we shall often look for in vain, either in books or in our own thoughts.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

In the beginning of 1824, the superintendent, who had his office at one end of our corridor, removed to some other place; and those apartments, with others annexed to them, were converted into prisons. We comprehended, alas! that new prisoners of state were expected from Italy.

Soon, indeed, those condemned at a third trial arrived; all of them my friends or acquaintances. Oh, what was my sadness when I learned their names! Borsieri was one of my oldest friends. I had been attached to Confalonieri a shorter time, but I loved him with all my heart. If I could have averted their punishment and restored them to liberty by entering *carcere durissimo*, or any other imaginable torment, God knows I would have done it! I do not only say that I would give my life for them! Alas! what is it to give one's life? To suffer is far more!

I had then great need of Father Baptista; but he was no longer permitted to visit us.

Digitized by Google

New orders arrived for the maintenance of more severe discipline. The terrace that served us for a promenade was first surrounded with palisades in such a manner that no one could see us, not even from a distance, with telescopes; and thus we lost the magnificent view of the surrounding hills and the city which they commanded. This was not enough. To reach this terrace it was necessary, as I have said, to traverse the court, in which many persons had the opportunity of seeing us. For the purpose of hiding us from all eyes, we were deprived of this place of promenade, and had assigned to us an extremely small one that was contiguous to our corridor, and facing the west, like our rooms.

I cannot express how much this change of promenade distressed us. I have not mentioned all the consolations that we enjoyed in the place which was taken from us. The sight of the superintendent's children, their sweet embraces, where we had seen their suffering mother in her last days; a little chat with the blacksmith that lodged close by; the joyous songs and music of a corporal who played the guitar; and lastly, an innocent love—not mine nor that of my companion, but of a good Hungarian woman, the wife of a corporal, who sold fruit. She was taken with Maroncelli.

Already, before he had been put with me, he and the woman, seeing each other almost every day, had formed a little friendship between them. His mind was so honorable, so noble, so ingenuous, that he was entirely ignorant of having won the love of this compassionate creature, until I called his attention to it. He hesitated to believe me, and in the mere doubt that I was right, he resolved to show himself cold towards her; but his increased reserve, instead of extinguishing her love, appeared to augment it.

As the window of his room was elevated scarcely a cubit from the level of the terrace, she tripped round to our side under the pretext of spreading out some linen to the sun or attending to some other little matter, and there she stood to look at us; and if she found opportunity she opened a conversation.

Our poor guards, always tired from having slept little or none during the night, gladly seized the occasion of coming into that corner, where without being seen by their superiors, they could sit down upon the grass and take a nap. Maroncelli was then greatly embarrassed, so manifest was the love of the unfortunate woman. My embarrassment was still greater. Nevertheless such scenes, which would have been quite laughable if she had inspired us with a little respect, were for us serious, and I might say pathetic. The unhappy Hungarian had one of those physiognomies that infallibly indicate the habit of virtue and the desire of esteem. She was not handsome, but endowed with such an expression of gentleness, that the features of her face, though a little irregular, seemed to grow pretty at each smile, at each movement of the muscles.

If it were any part of my design to speak of love, many things would remain to be said of this unhappy and virtuous woman—now no more. But it suffices to have touched upon one of the rare events of our imprisonment.

CHAPTER LXXX.

These increasing rigors rendered our life each day more monotonous. How did the entire years of 1824, 1825, 1826 and 1827, pass with us? We were deprived of the use of our books which the governor had conditionally granted us. The prison became for us a veritable tomb in which not even the quietness of the tomb was left us. Every month, upon some day indeterminate, the director of police came to make a thorough examination, accompanied by a lieutenant and his guards. They stripped us naked, examined all the seams of our clothes, in fear that some paper or other thing might be kept concealed in them; they ripped open our straw beds to rummage the interior. Although nothing private could be found upon us, this visit, hostile and made by surprise,

Digitized by Google

and repeated without end, had something, I know not what, that irritated me, and every time threw me into a fever.

The preceding years had seemed so unhappy, and now I thought upon them with regret as a time of pleasing enjoyments. Where were those hours wherein I plunged into the study of the Bible or of Homer? By dint of reading Homer in the original, the slight knowledge of Greek that I possessed was increased, and I became passionately fond of that language. How much I regretted my not being able to continue the study of it. Dante, Petrarch, Shakspeare, Byron, Walter Scott, Schiller, Goethe, etc., of how many friends had I been robbed!

Amongst these I also counted some books of Christian knowledge, as Bourdaloue, Pascal, The Imitation of Christ, Philotheus, &c., books which, if read with a narrow and illiberal criticism, exulting at every defect of taste, at every feeble thought, are thrown down and not taken up again; but if they are read without malice, and without taking exceptions at weak places, they discover a high philosophy, that yields substantial nourishment to the heart and the understanding.

Some of these religious books were afterwards sent to us as a present by the Emperor, but with the absolute exclusion of all other kinds of books that promote literary pursuits.

This gift of ascetic books was obtained in 1825, by a Dalmatian confessor sent to us from Vienna, Father Stefano Panlowich, who was, two years after, made Bishop of Cattaro. To him also were we indebted for the privilege of attending mass, which hitherto had been refused to us, on the plea that we could not be conducted to church, and kept separate, two by two, as it was prescribed.

So great a separation being impracticable, we went to mass divided into three groups: one was placed in the organ gallery, another below, in such a manner that they could not be seen; and the third in a little oratory looking into the church by means of a grate.

Maroncelli and I had then, as companions, six convicts, who had been sentenced before us, with a prohibition against any conversation between the couples. Two of them had been my neighbors under the *Leads* of Venice. We were conducted by guards to the place assigned us, and after mass, were reconducted, each couple, to their prison. A capuchin came to say mass. The good man always closed the ceremonies by an *Oremus*, supplicating our deliverance from chains, during which his voice trembled with emotion. When he retired from the altar, he gave a compassionate glance to each of the three groups, sadly, and inclined his head in prayer.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

In 1825, Schiller was regarded as now too much enfeebled by the infirmities of old age, and the custody of other prisoners was committed to him, for whom so great a vigilance did not seem necessary. Oh, how deeply we regretted his removal, and how it grieved him to leave us!

His immediate successor was Kral, a man not inferior to him in kindness: but in a short time he likewise received another appointment, and his place was supplied by one who, without being bad, was cross, and a stranger to all show of affection.

These changes distressed me deeply. Schiller, Kral and Kubitzky, but particularly the two former, had taken care of us in our sickness as a father or brother might have done. Incapable of failing in their duty, they knew how to discharge it without hardheartedness. If there was a little rudeness in externals, it was nearly always involuntary, and was fully redeemed by the proofs of attachment which they evinced. I was sometimes angry with them, but how cordially they forgave me! how they labored to persuade us that they were not without affection for us, and how rejoiced they were in seeing that we were convinced of it, and that we regarded them as worthy men!

After Schiller's removal from us, he had been taken sick many times and had recovered. We had inquired after him with filial

Digitized by Google

anxiety. When he was convalescent, he sometimes came to walk under our window. We coughed to salute him, and he said to the sentinel, loud enough for us to hear: "*Da sind meine sohne!*" ("These are my children!")

Poor old man! how it pained me to see thee slowly dragging along thy sick body, and I not able to support thee with my arm!

Sometimes he sat down on the grass and read. They were books that he had lent to me. And that I might recognize them, he told their titles to the sentinel, or repeated some passages from them. These were generally almanac tales or other romances of little literary merit, but full of moral instruction.

After several attacks of apoplexy, he was carried to the military hospital. He was already in a very bad state, and in a short time he died. He possessed a few hundred florins, the fruit of his long savings; and had lent them to some of his companions in arms. When he perceived himself near his end, he sent for his friends and said to them: "I have no longer any relations; each of you keep what he has in his hands. I only ask of you to pray for me."

One of them had a daughter of eighteen, who was the god-daughter of Schiller. A few hours before his death, the good old man summoned her to his bedside. He was unable to articulate his words distinctly; he drew from his finger a silver ring, his last wealth, placed it on the finger of the maiden, and embraced her weeping. The poor girl cried aloud, and covered him with her tears. He wiped them from her eyes with his handkerchief; then taking her hands he placed them upon his eyes——those eyes were closed for ever!

CHAPTER LXXXII.

Thus human consolations continued to fail us one after another; and our hardships were ever on the increase. I resigned myself to the will of God, but my resignation was accompanied with groans; and my soul, instead of becoming inured to suffering, seemed to feel it each day more acutely.

A number of the Augsburg Gazette was one day privily brought to me, in which a very strange thing appeared concerning me, occasioned by one of my sisters having taken the veil.

It ran thus: "La signora Maria Angiola Pellico, daughter of, &c., &c., has this day taken the veil in the monastery of the Visitation at Turin. She is the sister of the author of *Francesca da Rimini*, Silvio Pellico, who has recently left the fortress of Spielberg, thanks to His Majesty the Emperor; an act of clemency truly worthy of so magnanimous a sovereign, and that fills all Italy with rejoicing, since, &c." Here followed a panegyric of myself.

I was at a loss to imagine why this fable of my pardon had been invented. That it was a mere diversion of the journalist did not seem probable. It was perhaps some stratagem of Austrian policy? Who knows? But the name, Maria Angiola, was precisely that of my youngest sister. It must, doubtless, have been copied from the Gazette of Turin into other journals. The excellent girl was then really made a nun! Ah, perhaps she has taken this step, because she has lost her parents! Poor girl! She was not willing that I alone should suffer the distresses of a prison: she also must needs immure herself. May the Lord give her the virtues of patience and self-denial, more than he has to me! How often in her cell will that angel think of me! How often will she perform hard penance, to obtain of God an alleviation of her brother's calamities!

These thoughts softened and wrung my heart. My misfortunes must have too surely tended to shorten the days of my father or mother, or perhaps of both! The more I thought of it, the more it seemed to me impossible that, without such a loss, my *little* Maria could have abandoned the paternal roof. This idea weighed upon me as if it were a certainty, and sunk me into the most painful depths of sorrow.

Digitized by Google

Maroncelli was no less moved than I was. Some days after, he set himself to compose a poetical lament upon the sister of the prisoner. The result was an exquisite little poem, breathing the spirit of grief and melancholy. When it was finished he recited it to me. Oh, how grateful I was to him for this mark of kindness! Among the many millions of verses hitherto composed on the subject of taking the veil, these were probably the only ones that were composed in prison for the brother of the nun, by a companion in irons. What a union of pathetic and pious ideas!

Thus did friendship sweeten my evils. Alas, from that moment, not a day passed that my thoughts did not wander a long time in a convent of maidens; that among them I did not contemplate one, and one alone, with the tenderest compassion; that I did not pray ardently to Heaven to embellish her solitude, and not permit her imagination to paint my prison to her in too horrible colors!

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

Let not the reader imagine, from my secretly receiving this gazette, that I often succeeded in procuring news of the world. No: all about me were good people, but all were bound by excessive fear. If some slight infraction of discipline happened, it was only when there appeared to be really no danger. And it was difficult for any to happen, in the midst of so many inspections, ordinary and extraordinary.

With the exception of the word just mentioned, in relation to my sister, it was never given me to receive in secret, any news of my dear friends so far from me.

My fear that my parents were no more, was rather augmented than diminished some time after, by the manner in which the director of police once came to announce to me that my family were well.

"His Majesty the Emperor," said he, "commands me to give you good news of all the relations you have at Turin."

I leaped with pleasure and surprise at this communication that was never made before, and demanded further particulars.

"I left at Turin," said I to the director, "a father and mother, brothers and sisters. Are they all living? Oh! if you have a letter from any of them, I entreat you to show it to me."

"I can show you nothing. You must content yourself with that. It is a further proof of kindness on the part of the emperor, to send such consoling words: it has not been done before for anybody."

"I agree that it is a proof of the kindness of the emperor, but you perceive how impossible it is for me to draw any consolation from words so vague. Which of my relations are well? Have I lost none of them?"

"I am sorry, sir, that I can tell you no more than has been set down for me."

And thereupon he withdrew.

It was certainly intended to afford me some consolation by this news. But I persuaded myself that the emperor, willing to yield to the entreaties of some of my relations, and allow this message to be brought, did not wish me to be shown a letter, that I might not discover which of my friends were no more.

Several months afterwards another message of the same kind was brought to me. No letter, no further explanation.

They saw that I was not satisfied with that, and that it only increased my afflictions, and never afterwards did they tell me anything of my family.

The thought that my parents were dead, and perhaps my brothers also, and Josephine my other dearly beloved sister; that little Maria, their only survivor, was, perhaps, going to fade away in the anguish of solitude and the hardships of penance, detached me more and more from life.

Sometimes when violently attacked by my ordinary maladies, or by new ones, such as dreadful colics, with extremely painful symptoms like those of *cholera morbus*, I hoped that I might die; yes, that is the very word; *I hoped.*

And still (oh, the contradictions of man!)

Digitized by Google

when I cast a glance at my languishing friend, my heart was wrung at the idea of leaving him alone, and again I desired to live.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

Three different times, personages of high rank came from Vienna to visit our prisons, to assure themselves that there was no abuse of discipline. The first was the Baron Von Münch, who, moved to pity by the little daylight we enjoyed, promised to present a petition to have our day lengthened, by suspending a lantern for several hours of the evening on the outside of our wicket. His visit took place in 1825. A year afterwards his charitable purpose was effected; and thus by favor of this sepulchral light, we could thenceforth see the walls, and walk without breaking our heads.

The second visit was that of the Baron Von Vogel. He found me in a deplorable state of health, and learning that the physician, although he thought coffee would be good for me, dared not order it, because it was an article of luxury, he spoke a word of consent in my favor, and the coffee was ordered.

The third visit was that of, I know not what other lord of the court, a man fifty or sixty years old, who showed us, by his manners and his words, the most generous compassion. He was able to do nothing for us, but the sweet expression of his kindness was a benefit, and we were grateful to him.

Oh what an ardent longing does the prisoner feel to see the beings of his own species! The Christian religion, so rich in humanity, has not forgotten to place *the visiting of prisoners* among the number of the works of mercy. The sight of men who sympathize in your misfortunes, even when they have no greater means of assuaging them, soothes and consoles you.

Absolute solitude may contribute to reform some minds; but I believe that, in general, it will effect much more when it is not carried to extremes, when it is combined with some contact with society. At least that is the case with me. If I do not see my fellow men, I concentrate my love upon too small a number of them, and remain indifferent to the rest; if I can see, I will not say many, but a reasonable number of them, I feel a love for the whole human race.

A thousand times I have discovered my heart so entirely devoted to a few individuals, and so filled with hatred for others, that I was frightened. Then I went to the window, sighing to behold some new face; and deemed myself happy if the sentinel did not pass too near the wall; if he was at such a distance that I could see him; if he raised his head when he heard me cough, and had a pleasing countenance. When I seemed to discover in it a feeling of pity, I was seized with a sweet palpitation, as if that unknown soldier had been an intimate friend. If he moved away, I awaited his return with affectionate anxiety, and if he returned and looked at me, I rejoiced as if it were a great act of charity. If he passed no more in such a manner that I could see him, I remained mortified like a man in love, who discovers that his adored does not care for him.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

In the cell adjoining ours, formerly occupied by Oroboni, were now D. Marco Fortini and Signor Antonio Villa. The latter, once powerful as Hercules, suffered excessively from hunger during the first year, and when he was allowed more food he was unable to digest it. He languished a long time, till, reduced almost to the last extremity, he obtained the favor of a more airy prison. The unwholesome atmosphere of a narrow sepulchre was, doubtless, to him, as to all the rest, most pernicious. But the remedy he had prayed for was insufficient. In that large chamber he lingered on a few months, then, after several vomitings of blood, he died.

Digitized by Google

He was assisted by his fellow-prisoner, D. Fortini, and the Abbé Paulowick, who had come from Vienna in all haste, when Villa was discovered to be near death.

Although I had not attached myself to him so closely as to Oroboni, still his death was for me a great affliction. I knew that he was tenderly loved by his parents and his wife. As to him, he was more to be envied than mourned; but the survivors!

He had also been my neighbor under the *Leads;* Tremerello had brought me some verses of his, and had carried to him some of mine. Sometimes his poems were pervaded by a vein of deep feeling.

Learning from the guards after his death, what cruel sufferings he had endured, I seemed to be more strongly attached to him than while he lived. The unhappy man was unable to resign himself to death, although he was devotedly pious. He felt the greatest degree of horror of that awful change, yet ceased not to bless the Lord and cry to him with tears: "I am not able, O my God, to conform my will to thine, though I desire to do it; work in me this miracle!"

He had not the courage of Oroboni, but he imitated him in declaring that he forgave his enemies.

At the end of that year (1826), we heard one evening, in the passage, the ill-suppressed noise of many persons walking. Our ears had become well skilled in distinguishing sounds of all kinds. A door opened, which we recognized as that of the advocate Solera. Another opened; it was Fortini's. Among several voices speaking low we distinguished that of the Director of Police. What can it be? An examination at such a late hour? And why?

Presently they came out again into the corridor; when, lo! the voice of the good Fortini: "*O povercto mi!* excuse me, I have forgotten a volume of my breviary."

And he ran quickly to fetch the volume, and soon rejoined the little party. The door of the stairway was opened; we listened to their steps until they reached the bottom: we comprehended that those two had been so fortunate as to receive their pardon; and although it grieved us not to follow them, we rejoiced at their happiness.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

Was the deliverance of these two companions without any consequence to us? How did they gain their freedom, who, like ourselves, had been condemned, one to twenty, and the other to fifteen years of imprisonment; and why did not this favor shine upon us and many others? Did more serious obstacles exist, then, against those not liberated? or could this be a plan of pardoning all, but with brief intervals between them, two at a time? Perhaps every month? perhaps every two or three months?

Thus for some time we remained in doubt. More than three months elapsed, and no other liberation took place. Towards the end of 1827, we thought that December might have been fixed upon for the day of grace; but December passed, and nothing happened.

Our hope was protracted till the summer of the year 1828, at which time would expire my seven years and a half of imprisonment, equivalent to fifteen, according to the words of the Emperor, counting from the time of my arrest. But if the time taken up by the trial should not be included (which supposition was the most probable), and the computation should be made from the public announcement of my sentence, the seven years and a half would not expire till some time in the year 1829.

All the periods fixed upon by our reckonings passed by, and no pardon came. Meanwhile, even before the departure of Solera and Fortini, there came a tumor upon the left knee of my poor friend Maroncelli. At the commencement, the pain was slight, and only caused him to walk lame; then he had difficulty in dragging his chain, and rarely went out to walk. One morning in autumn, he desired to go out with me and breathe a little fresh air; snow had already fallen, and in an un-

Digitized by Google

lucky moment, when I was not supporting him, he stumbled and fell. The blow immediately caused the pain in the knee to become acute. We carried him to his bed, for he could no longer stand up. When the physician came, he at last determined to take off his irons. The tumor grew worse every day, attaining an enormous size, and becoming more and more painful. The torments of the poor sufferer were such that he could neither find rest in his bed nor out of it.

When it was necessary for him to be moved, to rise, or go to bed, I had to take hold of the diseased leg with the utmost delicacy, and carry it very gently in the way which was agreeable to him. Sometimes, from making the slightest change of position, he suffered convulsions a quarter of an hour.

Leeches, cauteries, caustics, poultices, dry and wet—everything was tried by the physician. They produced an increase of suffering, and nothing more. After the application of caustics, suppuration took place. The tumor became one entire sore; but it never grew less, never did the suppuration bring any relief to his pain.

Maroncelli was a thousand times more unhappy than I was; and yet, how I suffered with him! The cares of a nurse were pleasant to me in attending so worthy a friend. But to see him thus perishing, amid such long excruciating tortures, and not be able to restore him to health; to foresee that that knee could never be cured; to perceive that the sick man regarded his death as more probable than his recovery, and to be compelled to admire his courage and serenity—oh! it gave me inexpressible anguish!

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

In this deplorable condition he composed poetry, sung, and conversed; he did everything to blind my eyes, and conceal from me a part of his sufferings. He could neither digest his food nor sleep; he became frightfully emaciated, and had frequent fainting fits; and still, at times he recovered his powers and reanimated my courage.

What he suffered during nine long months beggars description. At last, a consultation was granted. The chief physician came, approved all that the doctor had tried, and went away without giving his opinion upon the disease, and what remained to be done.

A moment after, the deputy superintendent came in, and said to Maroncelli: "The physician-in-chief did not venture to explain himself here in your presence; he was afraid you had not strength to hear him announce the cruel necessity. I assured him that you had no lack of courage."

"I hope," said Maroncelli, "that I have given sufficient proof of that, in enduring these tortures without complaint. Can it be proposed to—— ?"

"Yes, signor, to perform an amputation. Only the physician, seeing the exhausted state of your body, hesitates to advise it. Do you feel yourself, in your present weakness, capable of supporting the amputation? Are you willing to risk the danger?"

"Of dying? And shall I not equally die in a short time, if they do not put an end to these torments?"

"We shall then immediately make a report of the whole affair to Vienna, and as soon as the permission to amputate shall have come"——

"What! is there need of a permission?"

"Yes, signor."

At the end of eight days the expected permission arrived. The sick man was carried into a larger chamber; he requested that I might come with him.

"I might die under the operation," said he; "let me at least die in the arms of my friend." My company was granted.

The Abbé Urba, our confessor (who had succeeded Paulowick), came to administer the sacraments to the unfortunate man. This religious duty over, we waited for the surgeons, who had not yet come. Maroncelli commenced singing a hymn.

At length the surgeons made their appearance: there were two of them. One was the

Digitized by Google

ordinary surgeon of the establishment, that is to say, our barber, who, when an operation was to be performed, had the right of doing it with his own hand, and was unwilling to yield the honor to any other. The other was a young surgeon, brought up in the school of Vienna, and already enjoying the reputation of great abilities. The latter, sent by the governor to assist at and direct the operation, would have wished to perform it himself; but he was obliged to content himself with watching its execution.

The patient was seated upon the edge of the bed, with his legs hanging down; I held him in my arms. Above the knee, where the thigh began to be sound, a ligature was bound, to mark the circle which the knife was to follow. The old surgeon made an incision all round, to the depth of an inch; then he turned back the skin thus cut, and continued to operate upon the naked muscles. The blood flowed in torrents from the arteries, but they were soon tied with a thread of silk. At last he sawed the bone.

Maroncelli uttered not a cry. When he saw them carry away his leg, dissevered, he gave it a look of compassion; then turning to the operator, he said: "You have delivered me from an enemy, and I have no means of rewarding you."

There was a rose in a glass standing upon the window.

"I pray thee bring me that rose," said he to me.

I brought it to him, and he presented it to the old surgeon, saying to him: "I have nothing else to offer you in testimony of my gratitude."

He took the rose, and wept.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

The surgeons had supposed that the infirmary of Spielberg was provided with all that was necessary, except the instruments which they brought. But the amputation being finished, they discovered that various indispensable articles were wanting: sticking-plaster, ice, bandages, etc.

The mutilated sufferer had to wait two hours, till all this could be brought from the city. At length he was able to straighten himself upon the bed, and the ice was applied to the stump.

The next day they removed the clots of blood which had formed upon it, washed it, drew forward the skin, and put on the bandages.

For many days nothing was given to the patient but half a tea-cup of broth with the yellow of an egg beaten. When the danger of the vulnerary fever was past, they began by degrees to reinvigorate him with more nutritious aliments. The emperor had given orders that he should be supplied with good food from the superintendent's kitchen, until he had regained his strength.

The cure was wrought in forty days; after which we were returned to our former cell. This had been enlarged by making an opening in the wall and thus uniting it to the room formerly occupied by Oroboni, and afterwards Villa.

I removed my bed to the same spot where Oroboni's had been, and where he died. This identity of place was dear to me; I seemed to be brought nearer to him. I frequently dreamed of him, and it appeared to me that his spirit really visited me, and calmed my mind with heavenly consolations.

The terrible sight of so great torments suffered by Maroncelli previous to the amputation of his leg, as well as during and after the operation, fortified my soul. God, who had granted me sufficient health throughout the time of his sickness, because my attentions were necessary to him, deprived me of it as soon as he could support himself on crutches.

I had several glandular tumors that were excessively painful. From these I recovered, but they were succeeded by pains in the breast, such as I had formerly experienced, yet now more suffocating than ever, and also by vertigo and spasmodic dysentery.

"My turn is come," said I to myself; "shall I be less patient than my companion?"

Digitized by Google

I studied, therefore, as far as I was able, to imitate his virtue.

Every human condition has, doubtless, its peculiar duties. Those of the sick are, patience, courage, and making all possible efforts not to be disagreeable to those about them.

Maroncelli with his poor crutches, no longer possessed the agility of other times, and he was much troubled at it, fearing that he should not serve me so promptly. He feared, moreover, that for the purpose of sparing him motion and fatigue, I would not have recourse to his assistance as often as I had need.

This, in truth, sometimes happened, but I endeavored that he should not perceive it.

Although he had recovered his strength, he was not, on that account, exempt from pain. Like all persons who had suffered amputation, he experienced painful sensations in the nerves, as if the part cut off still existed. He felt pains in the foot, the leg and the knee, which he had no more. In addition to this, the bone had been badly sawn, and piercing the new flesh, it produced frequent wounds. It was about a year before the stump was so far hardened as not to open again.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

But new evils assailed the wretched man, almost without intermission. At first he had an arthritis, commencing with the joints of the hands, and torturing his whole body for many months; and after that the scurvy. This last scourge covered his body in a short time with livid spots, which rendered it frightful.

I sought to console myself with the thought: since we have got to die here, it is better for one of us to be taken with the scurvy; it is a contagious disease and will carry us to the grave, if not together, at least within a short space of time of each other.

We both prepared ourselves for death and were calm. Nine years of imprisonment and great sufferings, had at length made us familiar with the idea of the total destruction of two bodies so broken, and so much in want of repose. Our souls trusted in the goodness of God, hoping to be re-united in a place where all the resentment of men ceases, and where we prayed that we might one day meet, in reconciliation, those who loved us not.

In former years, the scurvy had made dreadful havoc in these prisons. The government learning that Maroncelli was attacked by this terrible malady, dreaded a new epidemic, and consented to the demand of the physician, who declared that no remedy would be efficacious for Maroncelli but the open air, and advised that he should remain in doors as little as possible. As his roommate and being myself sick of cachexy, I enjoyed the same privilege,

We remained out of doors all the time that the promenade was not occupied by others, that is, from half an hour before day for a couple of hours, then during dinner-time, if we liked, and after that, three hours in the afternoon until after sunset. So much for ordinary days. On festival days the prisoners were not allowed to walk, and we stayed out from morning to night, except during dinner.

Another unfortunate, about seventy years old, whose health was entirely ruined, was added to our company, in the hope that the pure air might help him. His name was Constantino Munari, an amiable old man, passionately fond of literary and philosophical pursuits, and whose society was a source of great pleasure to us.

Should the time of my imprisonment be computed, not from the time of my arrest, but from that of my condemnation, the seven and a half years would end in 1829, in the early part of July, dating from the signature of the Emperor, or on the 22d of August dating from the day the sentence was made public.

But this period, too, passed, and all hope was extinguished.

Until then, Maroncelli, Munari, and myself sometimes entertained the thought of again

Digitized by Google

seeing the world, our dear Italy, and our relations; and it was the subject of conversations full of regret, piety and love.

August, September, in fine the whole year passed, and we made up our minds to hope for nothing more upon earth, except the unalterable continuance of our mutual friendship, and the assistance of God worthily to complete the remainder of our great sacrifice.

Friendship and religion are two inestimable blessings; they embellish even the hours of the prisoner, upon whom the probability of pardon has ceased to shine! God is truly with the unhappy;—with the unhappy who love him!

CHAPTER XC.

After the death of Villa and the departure of the Abbé Paulowick, who had been created Bishop, we received as our confessor the Abbé Urba, a Moravian, Professor of the New Testament at Brünn, and a distinguished scholar of the *Instituto sublime* at Vienna.

This institute is a congregation founded by the celebrated Frint, at that time chaplain of the court. The members of this congregation are all priests, who have already received their degrees in theology, and who pursue their studies there under severe discipline, in order to reach the highest eminence of knowledge attainable. The intention of the founder was indeed noble: that of a perpetual diffusion of true and sound learning among the Catholic clergy of Germany; and this object is pretty generally attained.

Urba, residing at Brünn, could give us a larger share of his time than Paulowick. He became to us what father Baptista had been, except that he was not permitted to lend us books. We often held long conferences together, which were beneficial to my piety, or at least seemed to be so, and which afforded me the greatest comfort.

In the year 1829 he had a fit of sickness, and being afterwards obliged to enter upon other engagements, he could no longer visit us. This grieved us deeply; but we had the good fortune to receive in his stead, the abbé Ziak, vicar, another learned and distinguished man.

Among the many German ecclesiastics assigned to us, we did not find a single bad one; not one whom we could discover willing to become the instrument of politics (a thing so easy to detect), not one, on the contrary, who did not unite in himself great learning, profound philosophy and a fearless profession of the Catholic faith. Oh, how worthy of respect are such ministers of the Church!

The few that I was acquainted with gave me an extremely favorable opinion of the German Catholic clergy.

The abbé Ziak also held long conferences with us. His example taught me how to bear my sufferings with calmness. Though tormented by constant diseases of the teeth, the throat, the ears, his face was never without a smile.

Meanwhile, under the influences of the open air, the scurvy spots of Maroncelli gradually disappeared; Munari and myself were, likewise, much better.

CHAPTER XCI.

The first day of August, 1830, appeared. Ten years had rolled round since I had lost my liberty; eight years and a half I had endured the *carcere duro*.

It was Sunday. We went, as on other festivals, into the usual enclosure. Again we looked from the little wall at the valley beneath us, and the cemetery where Oroboni and Villa reposed; again we spoke of the rest which our bones would one day find there. We sat down again upon our accustomed bench to wait for the coming of the poor female convicts to their mass, which was said before our own. They were conducted into the same little oratory where we went for the

Digitized by Google

following mass. It was close by the promenade.

It is the custom in Germany, for the people to sing the hymns during mass, in a living language. As the empire of Austria is a country having a mixed population of Germans and Sclavonians, and, as in the prisons of Spielberg, most of the ordinary convicts belong to one or the other of these races, the hymns at one service are sung in the German language, and at the other in the Sclavonic. So, also, two sermons are preached at each service, employing these two languages alternately. It was an exquisite pleasure for us to listen to these chants, accompanied by the organ.

Among the women there were some whose voices went to the heart. Unhappy creatures! Some of them were very young. Love, jealousy, evil example, had drawn them into crime! I heard again vibrating in my soul, their pathetic chant of the Sanctus: Heilig! heilig! heilig! and again I shed a tear in listening to it.

At ten o'clock the women retired, and we in our turn went to the mass. Once more I saw those of my companions in misfortune who heard mass in the organ gallery, from whom a grate only divided us, all pale, thin, and dragging with pain the weight of their irons.

After mass we returned to our cells. A quarter of an hour after, our dinner was brought. We made ready our table, which consisted in placing a board upon the bed, and taking our wooden spoons, when Mr. Weyrath, the deputy superintendent, entered our prison.

"I am very sorry to interrupt your dinner, gentlemen," said he, "but have the kindness to follow me, the director of the police is outside."

As the latter usually came for disagreeable purposes, such as searches or examinations, we followed the good deputy in very bad humor to the hall of audience.

There we found the director of police and the superintendent; the first bowed to us more politely than usual.

He took a paper in his hand, and with words interrupted, as if afraid of producing too sudden a surprise if he expressed himself more clearly, he said:

"Gentlemen—I have the pleasure—I have the honor,—to announce to you—that his majesty the emperor has again granted—a favor—"

And he hesitated to tell us what favor it was. We thought it might be some alleviation of punishment, such as exemption from the vexation of labor, having more books, or less disgusting food.

"But you do not comprehend?" said he.

"No, signor. Have the goodness to explain what kind of favor you mean."

"Liberty for you both and a third one, whom you will embrace directly."

It would seem that this news ought to have transported us with joy. But our thoughts reverted to our relations, of whom we had heard nothing for so long a time, and the apprehension of seeing them no more on earth took such possession of our minds as to destroy the pleasure which the announcement of our freedom was calculated to give us.

"You are mute!" said the director of police. "I expected to see you exulting with joy."

"I pray you," I replied, "to make known our gratitude to the emperor; but if we get no news of our families, it is impossible not to fear that we have lost our dearest friends. This uncertainty weighs upon us even at the moment which should be that of the greatest joy."

He then gave to Maroncelli a letter from his brother, which consoled him. He told me there was none from my family, and this made me still more afraid that some calamity had befallen them.

"Return to your room," he continued, "and I will shortly send you the third man who has likewise been pardoned."

We withdrew and awaited this third person with anxiety. We could have wished that all had been pardoned, yet there could be but one. Would it were poor old Munari! or such, or such an one! There was none in behalf of whom we did not offer prayers.

At length the door opened and we saw that our companion was Andrea Tonelli, of Brescia.

Digitized by Google

We embraced each other. Our appetite for dinner was gone. We conversed until evening, compassionating the friends that remained.

At sunset the director of police returned to take us out of that wretched abode. Our hearts uttered a groan as we passed by the cells of so many that we loved, without the power to take them with us. Who knows how long they must still languish there? Who knows how many of them are to be the prey of a lingering death?

A soldier's cloak was thrown round the shoulders of each of us, and a cap placed on our heads, and thus with our galley-slave clothes, but freed from our chains, we descended the fatal hill and were led into the city to the police prison.

It was a beautiful moonlight. The streets, the houses, the people that we met, all appeared so charming and so strange, after the many years since I had enjoyed such a sight!

CHAPTER XCII.

In the police prison we waited for an imperial commissary that was to come from Vienna to accompany us to the frontiers. Meanwhile, as our trunks had been sold, we provided ourselves with clothes and linen, and doffed our prison costume.

At the end of five days the commissary arrived, and the director of police consigned us to him, at the same time refunding the money that we had brought to Spielberg, together with that derived from the sale of our trunks and books; which money was afterwards restored to us at the frontiers.

The expense of our journey was borne by the emperor, and nothing was spared.

The commissary was Mr. Von Noe, a gentleman attached to the secretary's office of the minister of police. There could not have been given us a person of more finished education. He always treated us with the utmost respect.

I left Brünn laboring under a great difficulty of breathing, and the motion of the carriage so much increased the evil, that at evening I panted in a frightful manner, and it was feared that I would suffocate from one minute to the other. I had, besides, a burning fever all night, and the commissary doubted, on the following morning, whether I could continue my journey to Vienna. I said yes, and we set out. My suffering was violent in the extreme; I could neither eat, drink, nor speak.

I reached Vienna half dead. A good lodging was given us at the head quarters of the police. They put me to bed and sent for a physician, who ordered bleeding, from which I experienced great relief. The most rigid diet and great quantities of digitalis, were my only regimen for eight days, and I recovered. The physician was Dr. Singer; his attentions to me were truly those of a friend.

I had the greatest anxiety to set off, and the more so, that the news of *the three days* at Paris had reached us.

The emperor had signed the decree of our release on the very day the revolution broke out. He would not certainly revoke it now; but it was not unlikely, that since the times were becoming so critical for all Europe, he might fear popular movements in Italy also, and might be unwilling, at that crisis, to let us return to our country. We were fully persuaded that we should not return to Spielberg, but we feared that some one would suggest to the emperor the idea of transferring us to some city of the empire, remote from the peninsula.

I affected to be better than I was in reality, and begged them to urge our departure. I had in the mean time the most ardent desire to be presented to his excellency, the Count di Pralormo, envoy from the court of Turin to that of Austria, to whose kindness I knew I had become greatly indebted. He had exerted himself with the most generous and constant assiduity to obtain my liberty. But the prohibition to see no one whatever, admitted of no exception.

Scarcely was I convalescent, when a carriage was kindly sent us for several days, to take a few turns through Vienna. The commissary was obliged to accompany us, and not allow us to speak with any one. We saw the

Digitized by Google

beautiful church of St. Stephen, the delicious promenades of the city, the neighboring villa of Lichtenstein, and lastly, the imperial villa of Schoenbrünn.

Whilst we were in the magnificent avenues of Schoenbrünn, the emperor happened to pass, and the commissary made us retire lest the sight of our emaciated bodies might sadden him.

CHAPTER XCIII.

At length we left Vienna, and I was able to bear up as far as Bruck. There my asthma returned with all its violence. We called a physician; it was a Mr. Jüdman, a man of great merit. He ordered me to be bled, to remain in bed, and to continue the digitalis. Two days after I insisted on continuing our journey.

We travelled through Austria and Styria, and entered into Carinthia, without anything new; but, on arriving at a village called Feldkirchen, a little distance from Klagenfurth, we were overtaken by a countermand. We were to stop there until further notice.

I leave the reader to imagine how unpleasant this event was to us; I had, besides, the chagrin of having been the cause of disappointment to my two companions; if they were unable to reach their country, my fatal malady was the cause.

We remained five days at Feldkirchen, where the commissary did his best to amuse us. There was a little theatre of poor comedians, whither he conducted us. He treated us one day to the sight of a chase. Our host, with several young men of the country, and the proprietor of a fine woodland, were the hunters, and we, stationed at a convenient point, enjoyed the spectacle.

A courier came, at length, from Vienna, with an order to the commissary to conduct us to our destination. I rejoiced with my companions at this happy news; but, at the same time, I trembled to think that the day of, to me, fatal discovery was approaching, when I should learn that I had no longer either father or mother, and was bereaved of who knows what other dear friends!

My sadness increased in proportion as we approached Italy.

On that side, the entrance to it is not agreeable to the eye. From the beautiful mountains of Germany, you descend into the plains of Italy, for a long distance sterile and uninteresting; so that some travellers, who happen to pass along there before they know our peninsula, laugh at the magnificent idea they had conceived of it, and suspect they have been duped by those who have given them such brilliant descriptions of it.

The savageness of the country contributed to render me still more sad. To see our heavens again, to meet human faces not bearing the characteristics of the north, to hear the words of our language from all lips, deeply affected me; but it was an emotion which inclined me to tears rather than joy. How often, in the carriage, did I cover my face with my hands and weep, while pretending to sleep! How often, tossing with a burning fever, have I not closed my eyes during the night; sometimes uttering benedictions, with my whole soul, upon my beloved Italy, and thanking Heaven for restoring me to it; sometimes tormenting myself at having received no news from home, and imagining unreal misfortunes; and again reflecting that, in a short time, I should be forced to separate, perhaps, for ever, from a friend who had suffered so much with me, and had given me so many proofs of fraternal affection!

Ah! so many years of burial had not extinguished my power to feel; but this energy was so small for joy, so great for grief!

How I should have liked to see Udine again, and that inn where those two generous friends had taken the disguise of servants, and secretly pressed our hands!

We passed that city, leaving it on our left.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XCIV.

Pordenone, Conegliano, Ospedaletto, Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, recalled many associations. The first of these was the native place of a young man of merit, who had been my friend, and who had perished in the wars of Russia. Conegliano was the country, as the *secondini* of the Leads told me, where Zanse had been sent. At Ospedaletto, an angelic, but unhappy, creature had been married; she is dead now, but I had long revered her, and did so still. All these places, in short, awakened remembrances more or less dear; and Mantua more than any other. It appeared to me but yesterday, that I had come there with Ludovico, in 1815; only yesterday that I had come with Porro, in 1820! The same streets, the same squares, the same palaces, yet how great the changes in society! how many of my acquaintances removed by death! how many exiled! a generation arrived at manhood whom I had seen in their infancy! And to be unable to run to this or that house, or speak of such or such an one to anybody!

And, for a climax to my sorrow, Mantua was the point at which Maroncelli and I were to separate. We passed a night there, both extremely sad. I was agitated as a man upon the eve of his condemnation.

In the morning, I washed my face, and looked in the glass to see if any one could discover that I had been weeping. I put on, as much as I could, a serene and smiling air; I addressed a short prayer to God, but it was, in truth, much distracted; and hearing Maroncelli already moving his crutches and speaking to the servant, I went to embrace him. Both of us seemed full of courage for this separation; we spoke with a little emotion, but with a steady voice. The officer of the guard, who was to take him to the frontier of Romagna, had come; he was obliged to go; we hardly knew what to say to each other; an embrace, a kiss, and still another embrace. He mounted the carriage, and disappeared; I remained like one annihilated.

Returning to my chamber, I threw myself on my knees, and interrupted by tears and sobs, I poured forth a prayer for the poor mutilated fellow, now separated from his friend.

I have known many distinguished men, but none more affectionately social than Maroncelli; no one who better understood all the niceties of politeness; who was more exempt from fits of ill-humor; who was more constantly mindful that virtue is composed of the continual exercise of forbearance, of generosity, and of the judgment. Oh, my companion in so many years of suffering, may the blessings of Heaven attend thee wherever thou art, and give thee friends that equal me in affection, and surpass me in goodness!

CHAPTER XCV.

We left Mantua the same morning for Brescia, where my other fellow-prisoner, Andrea Tonelli, was set at liberty. The unhappy man there learned that he had lost his mother, and his tears and despair wrung my heart.

Although I was oppressed with anguish from so many causes, the following incident forced me to laugh.

Upon the table of the inn was a bill of the theatre; I took it up and read: "*Francesca da Rimini, opera*, etc."

"Whose opera is this?" said I to the waiter.

"Who has put it into verse, and set it to music, I do not know," he answered; "but, in substance, it is still the same *Francesca da Rimini*, that everybody knows."

"Everybody? You are mistaken. I, who come from Germany, what do I know of your Francescas?"

The waiter (he was a young fellow of a scornful countenance, a real Brescian) looked at me with an air of contemptuous pity.

"What do you know? Who talks about *Francescas?* There is only one single *Francesca da Rimini;* that is, the tragedy of Signor Silvio Pellico. They have turned

Digitized by Google

it into an opera here, by spoiling it a little, but it is still the same."

"Ah! Silvio Pellico? It seems to me I have heard that name before. Is it not that rascally malcontent that was condemned to death, and then to *carcere duro*, eight or nine years ago?"

Would that I had not uttered this jest! He looked around him, then fixed his eyes upon me, and if he had not heard some noise, I believe he would have knocked me down.

He went away muttering "rascally malcontent!" But before I started, he discovered who I was. He could then neither ask a question, nor reply, nor walk. He could do nothing but stare at me, rub his hands, and say to everybody, unseasonably, "Yes, sir! Yes, sir!" as if he were beside himself.

Two days after, on the ninth of September, I arrived at Milan with the commissary. In approaching the city, at the sight of the cupola of the dome, in passing again along the avenue of Loretto, once my usual and favorite promenade; when I entered the gate Oriental, and found myself upon the Corso, and ran my eyes along the houses, the temples, the streets, I experienced, at once, the sweetest and the most painful emotions; a violent desire to stop a while at Milan, and embrace the friends that I might still find there; inexpressible regret at the thought of those I had left at Spielberg, of those who were wandering in foreign lands, and of those that were no more; a lively gratitude at the recollection of the affection which the Milanese in general had manifested towards me; a slight feeling of indignation against some few who had calumniated me, while they had ever been the objects of my kindness and esteem.

We took lodgings at the *Bella Venezia*. It was here that I had so many times partaken of the joyous, social banquet; here that I had visited so many foreigners of distinction; here had an aged lady of great respectability urged me, but in vain, to follow her into Tuscany, foreseeing the misfortunes that would befall me if I remained at Milan. O touching memories! O days gone by, mixed with so many pleasures and pains, and so rapidly flown!

The waiters of the hotel discovered, at once, who I was. The news spread, and towards evening I saw many persons stop at the place and look up at the windows. One of them (I know not who it was) appeared to recognize me, and saluted me by raising both his arms.

Alas! where were the sons of Porro, my sons? Why did I not see them?

CHAPTER XCVI.

The commissary conducted me to the police, to present me to the director. What were my sensations in revisiting that house, my first prison! How much suffering recurred to my mind! With what tenderness, Melchiore Gioja, did I remember thee, and the hurried steps which I saw thee make up and down within those narrow walls, and the hours thou didst spend immovable at thy table, writing thy noble thoughts, the signs thou madest me with thy handkerchief, and the sadness of thy look to me when those signs were forbidden! And I thought of thy tomb, unknown perhaps to the greater number of those who loved thee, as it was unknown to me!—and I prayed for the peace of thy soul!

I remembered, too, the little mute, the touching voice of Magdalen, my palpitation of compassion for her, the thieves my neighbors, the pretended Louis XVII., the poor convict taken with the billet in his hand, and whom I thought I heard shriek under the rod. These and other reminiscences oppressed me like a painful dream, but more than all the recollection of the two visits of my poor father, ten years before. How the good old man deceived himself in hoping that I would soon be able to join him at Turin! Could he have supported the idea of ten years' imprisonment for his son, and of such imprisonment! But when his illusions vanished, had he, had my mother, the strength to sustain a

Digitized by Google

grief so harrowing? Was it yet given me to behold them both once more? or perhaps one, and which?

Oh, most tormenting and ever springing doubt! I was, so to speak, at the door of my house, and did not yet know whether my parents were still alive; whether even one of my family remained.

The director of police received me with politeness, and permitted me to remain with the imperial commissary at the *Bella Venezia*, instead of guarding me elsewhere. He did not allow me, however, to show myself to any one, and that determined me to depart the next morning. I only obtained permission to see the Piedmontese consul, for the purpose of gaining some news of my family. I would have gone to his house, but being taken with fever and obliged to go to bed, I sent to beg him to come and see me. He had the politeness not to make me wait; and how grateful I was to him!

He gave me good news of my father and my eldest brother. Concerning my mother, my other brother, and my two sisters, I remained in cruel uncertainty. Assured in part, but not sufficiently, I would have liked to prolong my conversation with the consul for the purpose of relieving my mind. He was not lacking in politeness, but was at length obliged to leave me.

When left alone, I would have wept but could not. Why is it that sometimes sorrow made me burst into tears, while at other times, and even most generally, when it seems to me that tears would be a sweet relief, I invoke them in vain? This impossibility of giving vent to my affliction heightened my fever; my head ached violently.

I requested Stundberger to give me some drink. This excellent man was a sergeant of the police of Vienna, performing the duties of a servant for the commissary. He was not old, but he happened to give me the cup with a trembling hand. This tremor reminded me of Schiller, my beloved Schiller, when, the day of my arrival at Spielberg, I demanded the pitcher of water with an imperious air, and he presented it.

Strange! this remembrance, joined to the others, broke the rock of my heart, and the tears started.

CHAPTER XCVII.

On the morning of the tenth of September, I embraced my excellent commissary and departed. We had known each other only one month, and yet he already appeared to me a friend of many years' standing. His mind, possessing in a high degree a sense of the beautiful and the honorable, was without trick and artifice; not that he wanted talents for intrigue, but because he had a love of that noble ingenuousness to be found in upright men.

Some person, at a place where we stopped during our journey, said to me privately: "Be on your guard against that *guardian angel;* if he were not an angel of darkness he would not have been assigned to you."

"Indeed you are mistaken," I replied, "I have the fullest conviction that you are mistaken."

"The most cunning," answered he, "are those who appear the most candid."

"If it were so, we could no longer trust in the virtue of any one."

"There are certain positions in society, where you will meet the most finished education in respect of manners, but not of virtue! not of virtue! not of virtue!"

I was unable to make any reply, otherwise than: "Exaggeration, my dear sir, exaggeration!"

"I am firm in my opinion," he insisted.

But we were interrupted, and I remembered the *cave a consequentiis* of Leibnitz.

The greater part of men reason with this false and terrible logic: "I follow the standard A., which I am certain is that of justice; my neighbor follows the standard B., which I am equally certain is that of injustice; therefore he is a bad man."

Ah no, ye mad logicians! to whatever standard you belong, do not reason so inhumanly! consider that in setting out from any

Digitized by Google

unfavorable point whatever (and where is the society or individual that has none?) and with inflexible rigor proceeding from consequence to consequence, it is easy for any one to arrive at this conclusion: "Besides us four, everybody deserves to be burnt alive." And if a more narrow scrutiny is made, each of the four will say; "Everybody deserves to be burnt alive, except myself."

This illiberality, so common, is antiphilosophical in the highest degree. A moderate distrust may be wise; excessive distrust can never be.

After the warning which I had received concerning this *guardian angel*, I applied myself to study him more attentively than I had hitherto done, and I became each day more convinced that his nature was noble and inoffensive.

When an order of society is established, whether more or less good, it matters little, all the offices of that society which are not regarded as infamous by the moral sense of the community; all that promise to co-operate nobly for the public good, and in the promises of which a great many persons place confidence; all the offices in which it would be absurd to deny there were many honorable men, may always be filled by honorable men.

I have read of a quaker who had a horror of soldiers. He once saw a soldier throw himself into the Thames and save a wretch that was drowning; and said: "I shall always be a quaker, but soldiers are also good creatures."

CHAPTER XCVIII.

STUNDBERGER accompanied me to the carriage, which I mounted with a brigadier of the guard, to whom I had been committed. It rained, and the wind was cold.

"Wrap yourself well in your cloak," said Stundberger to me, "cover your head better, try not to reach home sick; it will require so little to make you take cold! How sorry I am that I cannot lend you my services as far as Turin!"

He said all this with the utmost earnestness, and with a voice of deep emotion.

"Hereafter," he added, "you will perhaps have no German near you, and will never more, perhaps, hear that language spoken which the Italians find so harsh, and it will probably cause you little concern. You have had to endure so many sufferings among the Germans, that you will not have a very great desire to remember us. And yet I, whose name you will soon forget, I, signor, shall always pray for you."

"And I for you," said I, squeezing his hand for the last time.

The poor man cried again: "*Guten morgen! gute reise! leben sie wohl!*" (Good morning, a pleasant journey! farewell!) These were the last German words that I heard spoken; and they sounded as sweet to my ear as if they had been my own language.

I love my country passionately, but I do not hate any other nation. Civilisation, wealth, glory, vary in different nations; but in all there are souls obedient to the great vocation of man, to love, to pity, and to do good.

The brigadier who accompanied me, informed me that he had been one of those who arrested my unhappy friend Confalonieri. He related to me how he had tried to fly, how he had failed in his attempt, how he had been torn from the arms of his wife, and how Confalonieri and she, though deeply afflicted, had borne their misfortune with dignity.

I burned with fever while listening to this tale of misery, a hand of iron seemed to wring my heart.

The narrator, a man of open disposition and free and confident in conversation, did not perceive, that though I had nothing against him, I could not help shuddering when I looked at the hands which had been laid upon my friend.

He took breakfast at Buffalora; I was too deeply distressed, and took nothing.

Once before, many years ago, when I was

Digitized by Google

rusticating at Arluno with the sons of Count Porro, I often came for a walk to Buffalora along the Ticino.

I rejoiced to see completed the beautiful bridge, the materials for which I had seen scattered on the Lombardy bank of the river, with the opinion common at that time, that the undertaking would never be accomplished. My heart bounded with joy at again crossing that river and once more touching the soil of Piedmont. Ah! though I love all nations, God knows how much more I love Italy, and of all the Italian states, God knows how much the sweetest to my ear is the name of Piedmont, the land of my fathers!

CHAPTER XCIX.

Opposite to Buffalora is San Martino. There the Lombard brigadier spoke to the carbiniers of Piedmont, then saluting me, he re-recrossed the bridge.

"We go to Novarra," said I to the coachman.

"Have the goodness to wait a moment," said a carbin,er.

I saw that I was not yet free, and felt greatly annoyed at it, fearing that my arrival at the paternal mansion might be retarded.

After more than a quarter of an hour, a gentleman appeared who asked my permission to ride to Novarra with me. He had already lost one opportunity and now there was no other carriage but mine, and he was very happy that I allowed him to take advantage of it, etc.

This carbinier in disguise had a pleasant humor and was good company for me to Novarra. When we arrived in that city, pretending that he wanted to stop at some hotel, he directed the carriage to the barrack of the carbiniers, where I was told that there was a bed for me in the chamber of a brigadier, and that I was to wait for superior orders.

I thought I should be able to go on the next day; I went to bed, and after chatting a while with my host the brigadier, I fell into a profound sleep. For a long time I had not slept so well.

Towards morning I awoke and rose at once, and the first hours appeared very long to me. I breakfasted, conversed and walked about in the room and upon the terrace, cast a glance at the books of my host; and at length a visiter was announced.

A genteel looking officer came to give me news of my father, and to inform me that there was a letter at Novarra from him, which would be brought to me in a short time. I was extremely obliged to him for his amiable courtesy.

Several hours passed which seemed to me an age, when at last the letter appeared.

Oh, what joy to see again those precious characters! what joy to learn that my mother, my most excellent mother, was still living! that my two brothers and my eldest sister were also alive! The youngest, alas! who was made a nun of the visitation, and of whom I had secretly received intelligence in prison, had been dead nine months.

It is sweet to me to believe that I am indebted for my freedom to all those who love me, and ceased not to intercede with God in my behalf, particularly a sister, who died showing evidences of the most elevated piety. May God reward her for all the anguish which her heart suffered on account of my misfortunes!

Days passed by, and the permission to leave Novarra came not. On the morning of the 16th of September, the permission was at length given to me, and I was freed from all custody of the carbiniers. Oh! how many years it had been, since I had been able to go where I pleased without the attendance of guards!

I received some money, had a polite visit from a person who was acquainted with my father, and set off about three in the afternoon. My travelling companions were a lady, a merchant, a sculptor, and two young painters, one of whom was deaf and dumb. These painters came from Rome, and I had the pleasure of learning that they knew the family of Maroncelli. It is delightful to

Digitized by Google

speak of those we love, with persons to whom they are not indifferent.

We passed the night at Vercelli. The happy day of the 17th of September dawned. We continued our journey. Oh, how slow coaches are! We did not reach Turin until evening.

Who ever, ever can describe the consolations of my heart and the hearts so dear to me, when I again saw and embraced my father and mother and brothers? My dear sister Josephine was not there, her duties detaining her at Chieri; but on learning my return, she hastened to come and spend some days at home. Restored to those five dearest objects of my affection, I was, I am, the most enviable of mortals.

Blessed be Providence for the misfortunes of the past and the felicity of the present, as well as for all the good and evil yet in reserve for me!

Men and things, whether they wish it or not, are the admirable instruments which it knows how to employ in the accomplishment of worthy ends.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google